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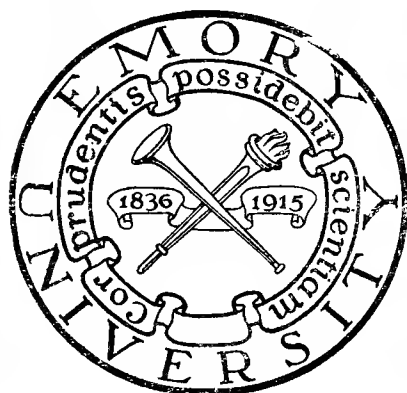
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LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO.,
172, ST. JOHN STREET, E.C.

CONTENTS.

I. THE PILGRIMAGE	5
II. RAINY POND	15
III. TOM AS A DOCTOR	28
IV. ARCHIE'S RIDE	34
V. TWO LETTERS	43
VI. FISHING IN THE WELL	52
VII. AUNT MARIA	63
VIII. REBELLION	75
IX. AUNT MARIA'S INDIGNATION	87
X. MAMMA	98
XI. THE FAMILY COUNCIL	112
XII. A LETTER FROM TOM	121
XIII. INTIMATE FRIENDS	145
XIV. AUNT LUCY'S SERMON	165
XV. A VISIT FROM AUNT MARIA	171
XVI. CONCLUSION	179

SOME OTHER BABIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PILGRIMAGE.

FOUR children sat around a wood fire, in an old-fashioned country house. The thick wooden shutters were closed to keep out the storm, and the pine-cones which they threw on the red embers blazed up merrily, and showed four flushed little faces, four very tangled heads of hair, eight bright merry eyes, and—I regret extremely to add—eight very dirty little hands, belonging, respectively, to Bess, Bob, Archie, and Tom.

Mamma was away, you may be sure, and papa, although a firm believer in cold water as a drink, never could be made to see its virtue as a wash when he was left in charge of the family.

“People use water to wash with in England, and to drink in Spain,” quoted papa, as if that were any excuse for not doing both in America.

Oh, Mr. Bradley! You knew well enough that

if Mrs. Bradley were at home, those eight little grimy hands would have shone white and clean in the firelight, and the curly gold and shaggy black locks of your four children would have made a very different appearance that stormy evening; oh, yes, indeed, quite and entirely different.

But mamma had gone away, and would not be home again for a week, and papa had a new book, so he did not hear or see the little ones, who will now show us what children do when they are left alone.

"Bess! move that apple, it's roasting too much, it's bursting itself out, and getting burned!" said Tom.

Bess pushed it with the toe of her little thick shoe, and it rolled into the ashes.

"Now, Tom, it's all dirty, you've made me spoil it!"

"Hi! that's hot!" said Tom, picking it up with his fingers, and hastily placing it on the andiron, after polishing it briskly on his sleeve for a moment, to get rid of the ashes.

"Now, Bess, you just watch that apple; I've picked it up four times for you, and I won't do it again."

Bess munched contentedly on her nut; she knew Tom would burn his fingers once more at least for her.

"Archie's got my last nut!" cried Bob, scuffling with that young despoiler and getting the worst of it.

"Drop it!" said Tom, and Archie dropped it. Tom kept order; he was the big brother, eleven years old.

"Let's tell stories," said Archie, who had come to the end of his repast.

"Don't know any," answered Tom.

"I do," said Bess, "but I'm too sleepy now to tell any. I've read my Sunday-book through; it's lovely, it's called *Pilgrim's Progress*, and I'm going to be a pilgrim. To-morrow morning I'm going to get up early and start."

"Where are you going?" asked the boys in chorus.

"I don't know," answered Bess, "anywhere I can."

"What for?" inquired the chorus.

"I told you I was sleepy," said Bess.

"Never mind, you've got to tell us about it," cried the boys, and Tom put his boot-toe to the apple, and added, "If you don't, I'll kick your apple into the fire."

"Oh, don't!" cried Bess, starting. "Tom, you're real mean,—stop!"

"Tell us about your book, then," commanded that young despot, and added in a kinder tone, "Do, Bess, there's a good girl, you tell stories

so nicely, and if you will, I'll hook a lump of sugar to crumb over your apple."

"A big lump?"

"Yes, real big—monstrous."

"Well, then, children," began Bess, moved by the compliment, and still more by the sugar, "the book is all about a man named Christian. He lived at home."

"No! did he though!" said Tom, "how exciting!"

"If you interrupt," said Bess, "I won't tell the story."

"Go on, gee up, drive on your cart," cried Tom.

"He didn't live at home very long, anyway," continued the narrator, "because the people there were all bad, and so he set out to go to a beautiful city, ever so far off. He wanted his wife and children to go too, but they wouldn't, so he went alone."

"In the steam-cars?" asked Bob.

"No, Goosy! there were no cars where he lived. He went walking along, and he tumbled in a bog, and he had a lot of adventures, and saw lots of things, and after a while he got to the city—and—and—that's all," wound up Bess, suddenly.

"Pooh! that's no kind of a story," said Tom, "you've got nothing to tell. I won't give you

any sugar for that, I can tell you! Tell us what adventures he had, or you won't get the sugar."

"No, I won't, I'm sleepy," said Bess, yawning, "and you've got to give me the sugar, because you said you would, and if you don't, it will be telling a lie. I'm going on a pilgrimage myself to-morrow; you're all too bad for me to stay at home any longer. If you want to come with me, you can."

"I'll go," said Archie; but Bob remembered the last time he had journeyed with Bess, and how they had got scratched in the briars, so he kept quiet; and Tom, holding a lump of sugar just before Bessie's nose, and snatching it away again every time she tried to get it, was too much occupied to accept the invitation.

In the scuffle which now ensued, Bess knocked down her chair, and Mr. Bradley, roused by the noise, turned around quickly upon the children, and ordered them off to bed. Now, although papa did not care about dirt, he did for disobedience; and the children knew this, and always jumped like lamplighters when he spoke to them. Bob and Archie made for the door without ceremony, Tom snatched up the hot apple, and hastily crushed the sugar down with a spoon upon it, and Bess, standing on tiptoe

kissed the top of her father's head, and said, "Good-bye, papa." "Good-night, dear," answered he, and went on reading, while Bess and Tom ran off together, amicably finishing the apple, with alternate bites by the way.

The storm was a short one, and the heavy clouds rolled away and let the moon shine right on to Bessie's face, very, very early the next morning. It woke her up, and she thought it was the sunrise. Remembering her resolution to go on a pilgrimage that day, she got up and dressed herself.

"I'll take my stick, and Archie, if he'll come," she said to herself. The stick was more easily obtained than Archie, who rubbed his eyes and turned over in bed, and said it wasn't time to get up yet.

"Yes it is," said Bess, "I'm going now, and I'll not tell you a word about my adventures; if you don't come along, and find out for yourself, you'll never know them. You're a regular lazibones; come, get up, or I'll go without you."

But Archie muttered something about not caring for adventures, and nestled down among his pillows.

"I'll cold-pig you!" said Bess, going to the washstand and filling a mug with water; and Archie, who knew by sad experience that she

would, jumped hastily out of bed, and looked very cross.

"Now hurry and dress," commanded Bess, "while I go and find something to eat. We're two Christians starting on our pilgrimage. Don't dawdle!"

Archie struggled into his clothes, slipped on his shoes, and clattered downstairs, the brass tags of his hanging shoe-strings tapping behind him all the way with a sharp little sound.

"Don't make so much noise," said Bess, coming out of the pantry with a tin pail in her hand, and a bundle of shawls under her arm.

"What's the harm?" asked Archie. "You're afraid papa won't let you go, and you're sneaking off," he added, as Bess moved somewhat stealthily across the floor to the front door.

"No such thing," said Bess, quickly. "Of course he'd be glad to have me go on a pilgrimage, it's a very good thing to do; I dare-say he has been himself, and got back long ago. Now come along!" And, considering that she was not afraid of being stopped, Bessie moved rather more quickly than was necessary, and closed the door softly, instead of slamming it, as usual.

The ground was wet after the heavy rain of the night, but the sky was clear, and a few

birds were beginning their morning song, deceived, like Bess, into thinking it was time to be up, by the bright moonlight. But they all found out their mistake, for when the moon went behind a bank of clouds, the decreasing light made Archie exclaim: "Now Bess, that's too bad of you! It's not time to be up; it's only the moon, and no sunrise at all!"

"Well, never mind," said she. "Now we are up and out, we might as well keep on; it makes it more mysterious and interesting to set out by moonlight."

"Where are you going?" asked Archie, plaintively.

"Over those hills," said Bess, pointing to the horizon. "The river runs on the other side of the hills, and when we get to that, we'll cross over and soon be in a beautiful city."

"And what will we do when we get there?" asked Archie.

"Oh, all sorts of things," answered Bess, vaguely.

"We'll see! I shouldn't wonder if we had lots of adventures. Tom sha'n't say again that I've nothing to tell. Won't he wish he'd been along, when he hears about it all!"

This thought inspired Archie with courage; he tramped along beside Bess, his shoe-strings acquiring much mud at every step. The path

Bess had chosen was a wild one, being one made through the woods by the wood-cutters while carting during the winter:

Neither of the children had ever been on it before, so it had all the charm of novelty. They were both stout walkers, and had accomplished a mile or two before sunrise. By that time they were thoroughly tired and completely lost, though, as that was what they intended when they set out, it did not disturb them at all. Where would the adventure be, if they kept in the beaten road?

"Give us some breakfast, Bess," said Archie.

"No, not till we get to the Slough of Despond," said she.

"Where's that?" asked Archie.

"Oh, it's a bog; we'll come to it before long, I expect. That was the first thing Christian did; he plumped right into a bog."

"Why couldn't he keep out of it? I ain't going to get into a bog if I can help it," said Archie, but even as he spoke his foot sank down in soft earth. "Dear me, Bess, I guess we've got to it!" he cried.

"Shouldn't wonder," said Bess. "It feels pretty squashy around here. Come along where I am. We've got to go through it somehow or other, if it comes up to our necks!"

"Oh, I don't want to!" cried Archie.

"Come along!" said Bess, impatiently stamping her foot. Her shoe filled with water, and she had hard work to pull it out again. Archie began to cry.

"If all your adventure is to get stuck in a bog, I'd rather be home," said he.

"Well, go home, then!" cried Bess. "You're a little coward, Archie; from first to the last you've been a little plague. You're just like the man who started with Christian, in the book; he got scared at the bog, and went home. Go, if you want to!"

"I don't know the way," whimpered Archie.

"Well, then, stay with me and behave," said Bess. "Here!" she added, handing him a piece of pie from the tin-pail. "Sit down and eat this, and you'll feel better." Archie sat on a log, and Bess came and sat beside him, and they refreshed themselves with apple-pie and cheese.

"What's that?" suddenly cried Archie.

"Nothing at all," answered Bess.

"Yes, but it is, Bess," said Archie, sinking his voice to a frightened whisper. "I hear it again; it's something that shrieks and squeaks. Oh, Bess, what is it?"

CHAPTER II.

RAINY POND.

"WELL, do be quiet, Archie! how can I tell what it is, when you make so much noise talking?" asked Bess, impatiently. She wished she had left him at home, after all. The noise grew louder, and Archie hid his face in his sister's lap.

"Oh, I declare, I never saw such a coward," cried Bess. "It's only a wagon coming along."

And sure enough, in another minute, two oxen appeared, dragging a heavy wagon, piled with wood; the rumbling and squeaking was made by the wheels, which needed oiling. On the wagon sat Ben, one of the wood-cutters. He stopped his team as he came near the children. "What are you doing here?" he asked, in astonishment.

"We're just eating breakfast," answered Bess. "But Archie's got tired, and don't want to walk any more; will you take him home in your wagon?"

"Yes," said Ben, "he can get up here by me, and you'd better come, too, hadn't you?"

"No, I'd rather walk," said Bess, who had no idea of going home, but who was glad enough to get rid of Archie.

Ben helped the little boy up, and away went Archie, after receiving private instructions from

his sister to say nothing about her and her movements, either to Ben or anyone else at home. Archie promised, well pleased to have a ride ; for Ben was a great favourite with all the children. He supposed Bess would follow the wagon at her leisure, and Archie did not undeceive him. Left to herself, Bess finished her pie very much at her ease, and then, picking up her stick, resumed her pilgrimage.

It occurred to her that Archie's remark had some sense in it, and she saw no necessity for going into the bog if it could be avoided ; so she determined to go around it. Turning out of the wild-wood road, she walked some distance in another direction, but soon came to a very marshy piece of land. Again she turned, and again encountered the same thing.

"Well, I must go through it," she thought. So she resolutely tramped ankle deep into the mire. It was hard walking, and it seemed to her that at every step she went farther in. Still she kept on bravely. "This is the Slough of Despond," she thought. "Christian got out of it, and so shall I."

But at last she was frightened, for go which way she would, she found only tall grasses and reeds, which hid the water below, and as she tried to advance, she found herself up to her knees in it. Now she tried to go back, but

could not, for there was nothing to guide her, and she did not know which way to turn. She had left the wood, and before her lay what looked like a green field; but alas! she knew it was only marsh. Here and there lay a decaying log; and stumps of old trees, cut down long ago, rose above the waving grasses. To one of these she made her way, splashing now through deep water. She reached it, and was about to climb upon it, when suddenly an immense black snake raised its head and hissed at her from the very centre of the stump. Bess screamed loudly; however brave she might be about other things, she could not stand a snake. That was a thing that made her blood curdle in her veins, although Tom had often told her that the bite of a black snake was harmless. The creature glided off the stump, and disappeared swiftly. Bess just caught a glimpse of the long, black, lithe reptile, as it departed. It seemed to vanish as if by magic, and now Bess fairly jumped up and down with terror, for who could tell where it had gone. It might come up to her again any moment! She turned and tried to run; but running in a marsh is slow work. "Oh, how I wish I never had come here!" she cried. "The book didn't say a word about snakes. I never would have come, if I'd thought there were snakes!"

On she splashed, in the direction of the wood. Only let her get back on to dry land, and she could bear anything, she thought. But though she made her way towards the thick trees, she had turned her back upon the woods she had left, and was now hastening to a point which she soon found she could not reach; for between her and it lay a calm, still sheet of water, the marshy land she was on leading down to its brink. Bess was in despair, and completely bewildered. She had no desire to return to that snaky, marshy place she had just traversed. Indeed, she doubted if she could make her way back again over it, it was so very confusing, and she dreaded falling into some deep hole, for the deceptive waving grass covered many such, she was sure. She was wondering if she could possibly skirt the pond, and regain the firm footing and shelter of the woods, when her eye lit on a little scow which lay a few steps from her, tied by a piece of rotten rope to a log. It was a crazy little affair; but our brave Bess did not stop to examine it closely. She knew pretty well how to handle a boat, for Tom and she had often rowed together. So she fearlessly stepped into it, after unfastening the rope, and pushed off, delighted with this opportunity of reaching terra firma. There was an old hat in the boat, and a rusty tin dipper. Bess wondered

who it belonged to, and why it was left there ; and also, she began to wonder why the owner did not leave the oars in it, as Tom always did in his boat.

It seemed very unfortunate that they were not there, for the scow began to twist about in a very alarming manner, and Bess found that she was not able to steer or to paddle with her stick which she carried. The boat drifted further and further from the shore, and Bess, trying to "pole home," as Tom had taught her how to do, made the discovery that she was in deep water. This was bad enough, but in another minute she noticed that the scow was gradually filling with water. At this Bess felt her courage oozing out of her. She looked around for help, but could see nothing but the still sheet of water, with grey mist hovering over it, the flat marshy field on the left, and the woods on the right. It was but a short distance to the woods ; but the boat was unmanageable, and she saw no chance of getting there, and all the time the water got deeper in the scow. She seized the old tin dipper, and tried to bail the boat. Alas ! the dipper had a large hole in it, and held very little water. She now took the hat, and stuffed it hastily into the dipper, and tried again ; but for every thimbleful that she bailed out in this way a cupful came

in, and the scow seemed to be settling as though it were about to sink. Then Bess raised her voice and screamed. Shriek after shriek went ringing forth on the still autumn air. The crows in the trees, startled by the sound, flew from branch to branch, cawing loudly. "Help! help! oh, help!" shouted Bess. "Caw! caw! caw! caw!" cried the crows. "I'm drowning, oh, help!" again screamed Bess, with an agonized look around, as though the trees and crows could hear and help her. All the time she kept on bailing with the old hat and dipper. "Caw! caw! caw! caw!" went the crows, and flew over the pond, and lit on the opposite bank. "Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!" A wild laugh seemed to echo the birds, and Bess turned her head hastily in the direction it came from. On the bank stood a boy, who leaped and danced, and flung his arms up over his head, and laughed.

"Help me!" screamed Bess.

Again the wild laugh rang over the pond.

"Oh, I shall drown! I am sinking! help! help! help!" screamed poor Bess.

Indeed, the boat was now fast sinking; all the efforts Bess made could not keep out the water. Suddenly there was a splash, and in another moment the boat was seized and dragged to shore. Bess leaped from it hastily, and saw the boy come dripping from the water, dragging

the old scow after him. Without a word, he began to empty it of the water, which half filled it, and, to judge from the celerity of his movements, he was more used to handling the dipper than Bess, who stood by, trembling from her fright, and shaking with the cold ; for she was thoroughly soaked by this time. A second glance told her that this boy was Ned, the silly idiot who sometimes came to the farm and was found sleeping in the hay in the barn. All the little children were afraid of him, for he laughed and talked in a wild way, very terrifying to them, although he had never been known to hurt anybody in his life. Nobody knew much about him. Bess had heard it said that he lived in the woods, up by Rainy Pond ; and she had often asked him about himself, but had never received any other answer than a short, idiotic laugh. Half terrified, and yet grateful, Bess now spoke to him and thanked him. He paid no attention to her, but kept on with his work about the boat, and apparently did not know she was talking to him.

“ Can’t you show me the way home ? ” begged Bess, with chattering teeth. Her desire for pilgrimage had entirely gone now ; all she wanted was to get home safely, and be warm and dry again.

But Ned did not answer her.

"If you'll take me home, I'll give you ever so much gingerbread," said Bess.

"Hein?" grunted Ned, inquiringly, with his chin in the air.

"Lots of gingerbread and apples if you'll take me home," explained Bess.

"Come," said Ned, and, throwing away his dipper, he started on a full run. Bess had hard work to keep up with him; her shoes were full of water, and her clothes clung closely to her. Ned seemed to find paths where none existed. Through briers and bushes he made his way, pushing aside the low boughs of the trees, or creeping through tangled masses of foliage; he seemed to know where he was going, and kept on, evidently with a purpose. Bess trusted herself to her wild guide, for she felt it was her only chance of safety. She was so completely lost, and so broken-spirited, that she relied on herself no longer.

Ned kept on steadily, never turning to look behind him; and at last they came to a little clearing in the wood. A small wooden house stood in the middle of a potato-patch. It was a tumble-down little house, with a chimney that looked as though it would blow off in the first storm. The one window was stuffed with rags and paper where the panes of glass were broken, and the door hung by one hinge. A few

chickens were pecking around the door, and as Bess drew near a woman appeared, carrying a tin pan of newly dug potatoes in her hands. She stopped and stared at the little girl, as well she might, for Bess was a sight to behold. Her dripping clothes were torn by the briars, her hat had fallen from her head, and hung by one string down her back, her hair was flying in every direction, her hands were scratched and bleeding, and altogether she looked much more like a scarecrow than Bessie Bradley.

Ned muttered some unintelligible sentences to his mother, for such the woman was. She seemed to understand him, though Bess could not. She turned and addressed that young lady pretty sharply.

"What be you a doing here?" was her first question.

"I don't know," answered Bess. "Ned brought me. I've been nearly drowned in that pond over there, and Ned helped me; then I asked him to show me the way home, and he brought me here."

"What's your name?" asked the woman.

"Bessie Bradley," answered the child.

"Oh ho! that's a likely story! You Mrs. Bradley's child! No, no; I know better nor that!"

"But I am," declared Bess, "and I want to go home."

"Why did you leave your home, I'd like to know?" asked the woman.

Bess hung her head.

"I started on a pilgrimage," said she. "I was going to the beautiful city, but I got stuck in the bog; and there were snakes there, and I got in the boat, and I was nearly drowned, and now I want to go home. I'll give Ned gingerbread, all he wants, if he'll take me home."

"Look here!" said the woman, pointing her finger sternly at Bess. "Do you know why I live here, instead of in the village?"

"No," said Bess, "I don't. I should think you'd be lonely here."

"That's why I came," cried the woman. "I came to be alone a purpose! Why? 'Cause of Ned. When I take him where other children are, they jeer at him, and hurt him, and abuse him, 'cause he's an idiot. I hate them! I hate all children! They're a cruel set, and I hate 'em. Now, see here! You call my boy an idiot, and yet he knows enough to stay at home! You say he's a fool, but he saved your life! And you depend on him now to get you home, you proud little minx! I've seen you out a driving with your ma! I've seen your feathers, and your flowers, and your silks, and your satins.

Once your ma told me I'd ought to put Ned in a asylum, and have him eddicated, to be like other children! Do you think I want him eddicated to be like you, who don't know enough to stay at home, but must come roving off alone in the woods, and can't find your way back? He knows a lot more now than you do, for he never was lost in his life; he knows his way ten miles round here anywhere. Do you?"

Bess, terrified by this address, which was delivered with great energy and scorn, faltered out that she had no idea where she was at all and was very sorry she had come.

"But," she added, gaining courage as she went on, "I never laughed at Ned in all my life. We always give him good hot meals when he comes our way, and that's Tom's old hat he has got on now. Tom gave it to him. Ned likes Tom. Mother feels sorry for Ned. She told us never to laugh at him; she says the Germans call such as he is 'God's children.' I'm sure we never even wanted to laugh at him."

"God's children!" said the woman, in a softer tone. "Well! they've need to be God's children, for it's little love they get from man! See here!" she said abruptly, "you're cold and wet. Come in. If you've given my boy shelter, you shall have it here. Come!"

Bess followed the woman into a small room, where there was a cooking-stove, a bed, and an old chair. She was glad enough to feel the grateful heat, for she was chilled through and through. The woman made her take off her wet clothes, and gave her some dry ones of her own, which were clean and neatly made, although very coarse. She also made Bess drink a cup of hot tea, and while Bess was doing this, she brushed her shoes, and dried them near the fire. A feeling of almost uncontrollable drowsiness overpowered Bess, who begged to lie on the bed. Permission being granted, she threw herself down heavily and slept soundly for three hours. It was about the middle of the afternoon when she awoke, much rested and refreshed and with some of her old courage again in her heart. But she had entirely given up all idea of a pilgrimage; for she reasoned to herself, "If I can't take care of myself, but have to get helped by idiots, it's better for me to stay home awhile, till I'm older. I'll take that journey to the beautiful city yet, but I'll wait a year or so, before I set out."

To her great surprise and delight, she found all her clothes nicely washed, ironed, and mended. Ned's mother had been hard at work while her guest was sleeping.

"Oh, how good!" cried Bess. "Now maybe

I won't have to tell them at home ! If Archie has only held his tongue, I don't believe one of them will know anything about this scrape, so I shall not be laughed at."

She thanked the woman again and again for her hospitality, and promised to befriend Ned if occasion should ever require her to do so ; then, tying on her hat neatly, she started for home, with Ned as her guide, looking once more like herself.

It did not take her long to reach the farm, for although she had walked so far that morning, it was because she had gone in a circle, instead of keeping on in the straight path : Ned led her along the wild-wood road she had originally started upon, and in less than an hour she was at home. True to her promise, she bestowed quantities of gingerbread and apples on the poor boy, who returned delighted to his mother.

"Where's papa ?" she asked of Margaret, the housemaid, as she entered.

"Oh, he's gone to the fair at Middlebrook ; he went early this morning. I thought you were with him, miss."

"No," answered Bess, demurely, "I've only been for a long walk."

Margaret asked no more questions, and seemed well satisfied. She had greatly enjoyed her day's

rest, and had been too much occupied with her new bonnet to consider that this rest had come because the children had all gone.

"Excellent!" thought Bess. "Nobody shall ever know of this day's adventures." But Bess reckoned without her host, as we shall see hereafter. She was about to ask where the children were, when Tom suddenly burst into the room.

"Bess," said he, "I thought you'd never get home. Where on earth have you been? Come out to the barn; I want to tell you something. I've got into an awful scrape! Margaret, go up to the garret, and help Kate. She's sick."

CHAPTER III.

TOM AS A DOCTOR.

"WHAT have you been up to, Tom?" asked his sister, as soon as they were comfortably balanced on a high beam in the hay-barn. This was their favourite retreat, being entirely private. The little boys could not climb so high, and only hens invaded it, and they never told any secrets but their own.

"Oh, Bess, I do believe I've killed Kate!" said Tom, with a very anxious face. Kate was the cook.

"Mercy on me, Tom!" said Bess, nearly tumbling over in her fright. "What do you mean?"

"She is in bed in the garret," said Tom, mysteriously, "and I've just sent Margaret up to see her."

"Is she really dead?" asked Bess, with an awe-struck face.

"Not yet," answered Tom, but I shouldn't wonder if she did die, she's hollering so. I've either killed her or cured her of being deaf. I've sent for Dr. Jarvis, and we can't do anything till he comes."

"But what is it? How did you do it?" asked Bess. "Oh, Tom, have you been blowing her up with gunpowder, trying your experiments?"

"No, indeed!" answered Tom, earnestly. "I wasn't doing anything bad at all. You see, Bess, papa left early this morning, before breakfast, and you and Archie had gone off somewhere, so little Bob and I had breakfast all alone; and, soon after, Kate came to me and told me she was deaf—deef, she said. And she asked me if I knew what would be good for her to take to cure herself with. She wanted me to go to the village and get her some Herrick's pills; but I laughed at her, and told her they wouldn't cure her; but she said 'Yes, they would,' that her sister had taken them once, and they had cured her. I asked what ailed her sister, and she said she had been taken

'kinder snatchin' like with a dreadful pain across her.'

"I asked if she had a pain across her, and she said no, only she was deaf in her ear. So I wouldn't go for the pills. Now, Bess, you know, when papa was deaf last winter, Dr. Jarvis took a squirt and squirted into his ear; don't you remember?" asked Tom, very earnestly.

"A syringe; yes, I remember," answered Bess, "I held the basin; but do hurry up, Tom."

"I'm talking as hard as I can, ain't I?" said Tom, impetuously. "You'll hear soon enough! Well, I told Kate I'd squirt her ear for her, and that would cure her, sure pop, if she would get me a squirt."

"So we both looked for one, and couldn't find any; and after dinner—oh! do you know, Bess! Margaret's been away all day long?"

"Oh, Tom! do hurry up and go on! Who cares for Margaret?"

"Well, after dinner Kate began to cry, and say she was lonely and deaf and lost, because she couldn't hear the clock strike. So I went out into the shed and hunted about, and I found that big squirt that Wilson used in the garden, last summer, on the rose-bushes, don't you know?"

"Oh, yes! I know!" cried Bess, "do go on, Tom, to where you killed her!"

“I’m coming to that. I took it to her, and told her it was rather large, but I thought it would do ; and I made her sit down by the sink, so I’d have plenty of water ; and I did it just exactly as Dr. Jarvis did it. I pulled it full of water, and then I poked the pipe end into her ear, and then I let fly. Oh, Bess ! how she hollered and screeched ! But I told her to let me do it once more, and that would make her hear right away. So she sat down again, and that time I filled the squirt up full, and I poked the pipe in further, and let it fly again ; and, Bess, she tumbled right out of the chair on to the floor, and had a kind of a fit ! You never saw anything so awful in all your life ! She yelled b——y murder ! and she beat on the floor with her hands, and she banged her head against the wall ! I tell you, I was scared ! I did my very best to quiet her, but I couldn’t ; and there wasn’t a living soul in the house, so I didn’t know what to do. I kept asking her if she felt it in her head, and if she could hear yet ; but she wouldn’t answer me, but kept on yelling. Then I remembered that Uncle Peter once said women often had hysterics, and when they did you must always go away and let them alone. So I thought maybe this was the hysterics, and I went out on the kitchen piazza, and peeped in through the window.

"She kept on screaming for ever so long, and then after a while she got quiet, and I went in. As soon as she saw me she began again, but I told her to hush up and I'd help her to bed and go for the doctor; so after a while she got up off the floor, and tried to walk upstairs. I had to go behind and boost her, she was so dizzy. She kept tumbling back all the time.

"But she got upstairs and threw herself down on the bed, and I ran for Dr. Jarvis. He was out, and I'd just got back when I saw you. There! what's that? isn't that his gig? Yes! Come on, Bess, you come with me, won't you, and help tell about it?"

Both children clambered down from their lofty perch and hurried to the house, where they met the doctor just entering the front door.

"What's the matter?" he asked; "who is sick?"

"It's Kate, the cook. Come upstairs," said Tom, leading the way, and explaining as he went along. As they entered the garret-room where Tom's victim lay, they found her fast asleep; and Margaret said she had been so for some little time. So Dr. Jarvis listened patiently to Tom's account, and then asked to see the syringe. When Tom brought it in, he burst out laughing. It was the largest kind of a garden hand-syringe.

The noise waked Kate, who sat up in bed and looked wildly around her. As soon as she saw the fearful instrument in the doctor's hands she uttered a piercing shriek and retired beneath the bed-clothes, which she held tightly over her head. She evidently thought the doctor was going to renew Tom's treatment. It was some time before she could be made to understand that such was not the case.

At last she became calm, and gave Dr. Jarvis her own version of the story. "Misther Tom had the head off her. He had shot her thro' the ear wid his big instrhument, sure. She felt crazy like and confused intirely!"

After carefully examining the ear, Dr. Jarvis assured her that no harm had been done; that a little rest would cure, and advised her to go to sleep again. Kate, reassured, adopted this advice.

On his way downstairs the doctor seriously counselled Tom never again to try such heroic measures.

"But," answered Tom, "I cured her; for, don't you see, she heard every word we spoke to her, and this morning she was as deaf as a post."

The doctor laughed and said,—

"When you get older, Tom, come and study with me. You'll make a fine doctor. But until

then, don't exercise your talent in that line too freely."

"No, sir," said Tom, "I'll try everything first on cats, and if it don't agree with them, I won't try it on cooks."

"When will your mother be home?" asked the doctor, of Bess.

"Not for five days yet," replied she.

"Whew!" whistled Dr. Jarvis. "Well, if you need me again, send for me."

"Oh, we won't need you!" cried Tom and Bess together, and away drove the doctor.

But again they were mistaken.

CHAPTER IV

ARCHIE'S RIDE.

"O! r-r-r-a-a-sch! *chee!* O! r-r-r-r-a-a-a-sch! CHEE!! tschee! TSCHEE!!!" sneezed Archie.

"What on earth's got you?" asked Ben, turning round on his wood-pile seat to see the cause of the disturbance: "Got hold of my snuff-box, eh? Sarved you right! Guess you got enough of pickpocketing for once, hain't ye?"

"R-r-r-r-r-r-r-a-a-a-sch! R-r-r-r-r-r-r-a-a-a-sch!!!" answered Archie, to whom language at that moment was an impossibility. Ben chuckled. "That's rare stuff, that 'ere snuff is; you won't

find none better nowhere, but I guess you got about enough for oncet, so jest slip the box back again inter my pocket. Sarved you right !”

“ Oh dear ! Oh dear be ! Oh by ! Oh by dose ! It's bost off !” wailed poor Archie, holding on to his classic feature with both hands.

Ben slapped his knee with his hand and roared with laughter, as Archie again exploded with a prolonged sneeze.

“ O Bed ! Do subtig for be ! By head's loose !” groaned Archie, in pathetic tones.

“ You'll be all right in a minute,” said Ben, administering a gentle shaking, by way of a restorative. “ You see that's the time you got sarved just about right.”

This thought seemed to comfort Ben much more than it did Archie ; for though tears were streaming plentifully from his eyes, they were induced by snuff and not by repentance.

Archie was bound on a spree, as he called it ; and this consisted in going on Ben's cart to the village, instead of returning home as Bess had told him to. He had determined on a day of adventure ; and since the expedition with Bess had resulted in a failure, he argued that one in Ben's company would prove more exciting.

Archie knew well enough he ought to be at home ; but then he said to himself, “ Mamma is away, and papa won't know nor care.” So he

rode along triumphantly on the wood-cart, snapping the ox-goad, and crying out gee ! and haw ! to his heart's content. Ben's snuff-box had finally attracted his attention, with the above-mentioned result.

The patient oxen toiled slowly along, minding the sneezing no more than the whipping; for Pully and Hauly were well-conducted beasts, and knew better than to get excited over trifles. A gentle indignation was expressed in their large dark eyes, as they leaned towards each other; but this was more their habitual tacit protest against fate than any more recent provocation they had received from Archie.

Indeed, Ben had such implicit confidence in his team that he usually took a nap somewhere along on the road, leaving the oxen to guide themselves, which they did admirably.

So, as soon as Archie had sneezed all the sneeze out of him, and subsided, Ben stretched himself out lazily on the cord-wood pile and dozed as comfortably as though he were resting on downy pillows.

Archie, thus left to his own resources, could find little better to do than flick Pully's right ear, and shout insults to Hauly; but these attentions were quite lost upon those philosophic animals. He began to think life was dull, after all, and by no means what it used to be when

Robinson Crusoe was alive. He doubted if he ever should meet with an adventure, unless, indeed, he fairly ran off to sea ; and it was hardly worth while to do that, as long as Kate made such gingerbread at home. He dared not rouse Ben, for fear he would be put off the cart and sent home ; yet life on an ox-cart, with Ben fast asleep, was by no means desirable.

At last the oxen stopped of their own accord to rest before a farm-house, and Archie clambered down from his high seat and determined to improve the occasion by looking about. To his great delight he saw a barrel of newly made cider standing by the shed ; he knew it was cider, because the mill stood close by, and also a large pile of apples ; and Archie was well acquainted with all farm processes that turned the fruits of the earth into anything eatable or drinkable.

He soon found a long straw, one end of which he put in the hole at the top of the barrel, and the other in his mouth.

When there is a boy at one end of a straw and a cider barrel at the other, that usually happens which might perhaps astonish those unused to a boy's peculiarities. Much more cider flows through that straw than one would at first suppose possible.

But Archie's mother had often been heard

to say that he was no common child, and he now proved the truth of her remark ; at least, so far as his capacity for cider-drinking was concerned. After a while, however, even this amusement failed, and he returned to the cart, resumed his seat, and shouted to the oxen, who moved along slowly again.

As they neared the village, a burst of music aroused Ben, who sat up, and immediately began to shout at his oxen in fierce tones, just as if they could not take care of themselves, but must be told the way to go !

"Circus has come," said he to Archie.

"What ?" asked Archie.

"Circus has come ; don't you hear the music ?"

At this magic word Archie started up, broad awake in an instant. Here was his opportunity. Mamma never let him go to the circus ; here was his chance ! He would see it now, come what may.

As good or ill luck would have it, the tent was pitched directly opposite the very house where Ben stopped to unload his cart and deliver his wood. A crowd had gathered around, attracted by the music, and the performance was nearly over. While Ben was unloading of course there was but one thing for Archie to do, and that was to see as much as still remained to be seen of the show. He

walked to the entrance, but, alas! discovered that he had not a cent of money in his pocket. In vain he offered his peg-top, jack-knife, fish-hooks and string, even his pocket-handkerchief; the man, who took money only, at the door, laughed in his face. Archie returned the despised articles to his pocket, but regarded his handkerchief with more bitter hatred even than usual. It was always a bore, but now he detested the worthless thing.

Determined to see something, he joined the crowd of boys outside, and, following their example, threw himself face downward on the ground, and peered eagerly under the canvas of the tent. He could see the heels of the horses! and the clown's red and yellow legs! and he could hear the jokes and the applause! That was something, to be sure, and when the hoofs went more rapidly than usual, and the music played louder and faster, Archie became intensely excited, and raised his heels in the air and kicked and swayed them about, as did all the other boys. Archie's feet were a little conspicuous among the twenty other pair that waved about in the cool autumn air, because he had on a pair of boots, whereas the other boys had no other covering than that which the mud of the village supplied. If Archie's mother (who was at that moment sitting in the midst

of a well-dressed crowd of ladies, in her very best silk and velvet, plumes and laces) could only have seen her pet and pride in this position, she would have realized the fact that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

Suddenly a thrill ran through the prostrate crowd.

"They're a bringin' in the trick mules!" someone said.

Instantly, with a common impulse, all the boys assumed the perpendicular and rushed to the entrance. It was the custom to admit half a dozen outsiders at this time, that riders might be found for the unruly mules, who had been taught to throw everybody. The village boys considered it the highest privilege, as well as delight, to be selected for this honour. Each one was convinced that he could sit the mules; and the reasons why he did not, and the method by which he intended to next time, formed a large part of the conversation of these daring spirits from the time the circus left in the fall till it reappeared the following spring.

Archie, who understood the matter vaguely, rushed with the rest, and after much elbowing and boxing given and received, found himself inside the circus! He could hardly believe his good fortune; yet, there he was, close beside the clown! It was glorious!

The band struck up a lively air, and two of the boys who had entered with Archie attempted to mount the mules. Another moment, and they lay sprawling on the ground; the mules had thrown them over their heads. The audience shouted and cheered. Two more boys now came forward, and met with a similar fate. The cheering became tremendous, and the ring-master jeered and laughed at the unlucky boys as they picked themselves up and went off with rueful faces.

Archie's head whirled. The ring, the sea of faces around it, the spangled clown, the painted face of the master, the wild music beating faster and faster, the shouts and cheers, all combined to excite him, and the cider now made itself felt most curiously in his head. He was filled with a sudden violent desire to ride the mules. He knew he could do it! Without a moment's consideration he leaped forward and sprang into the saddle. "Hurrah! Hang on tight! Go it now! Go it while you're young!" screamed voices all around him. A sudden start of the mule threw him forward, but he threw his arms around the creature's neck, and, clinging with wonderful tenacity, he was whirled around the ring—how, he never knew, but others said the mule raced around the circle twice with Archie still clinging to it.

Oh, how the crowd cheered ! And the band played ! And the drum beat ! The noise was deafening. Suddenly the mule stopped ! And Archie lay on the tan bark directly under the animal's nose.

The shouts of laughter that rang up from the crowd drowned the groan that the child gave; and the ringmaster, seeing his white face, carried him outside swiftly, and laid him fainting on the grass.

Ben, looking up from his work, saw the gathering crowd ; and, running to the spot, saw Archie lying motionless and white before him — with a broken arm.

Dr. Jarvis had just sat down comfortably to a late dinner, after his day's work, and was telling Mrs. Jarvis about Tom's affair with the cook, when the front-door was hastily opened, and that young gentleman himself appeared, crying out breathlessly, —

“Oh, doctor ! Come home with me quick ! Archie's rode the trick mule and broken his arm ; come quick !”

Dr. Jarvis sighed, looked at his untasted dinner, got his hat, and said plaintively to his wife, “Their mother won't be home for a week yet !”

CHAPTER V

TWO LETTERS.

"BESS, stop jogging the table! How on earth can a fellow write with you around?" asked Tom, with asperity. The four children were again sitting near the wood fire, in front of which the round table was wheeled; and the student lamp in the centre shed its light on Tom's letter, which he was writing to his mother, and on Tom's inky middle finger, which looked as though ages might elapse before it could become white again.

Archie was leaning back in the large chair, his arm in a splint, his face very pale; but, judging from the rapid disappearance of the gingerbread pile on the plate near him, it is to be doubted if cider, trick mules, or broken arms seriously impair the appetite. Be this as it may, Archie did not refuse food.

Bess was devoting herself to him, her conscience pricking her a great deal, for Archie had told her he never should have thought of going to the village if she had not sent him away in Ben's cart.

Bob was busy harnessing his cat to a little cart. His main difficulty in this undertaking was the sleekness of her fur, which enabled her to slip through the harness all too easily, and

the sharpness of her claws, which Bob knew about from experience and did not care to test. Mr. Bradley was dozing on the lounge. He had returned from the fair quite tired out, and hearing from Dr. Jarvis that Archie's hurt, though painful, was not dangerous, he had composed himself to sleep and had slumbered peacefully ever since tea, after soliloquizing thus: "It's lucky his mother's away. How that would worry her! Poor Mary! she frets too much over the children."

"Read what you've written," said Bess.

"Yes, do," chimed in Archie. They were both anxious to know what account their mother would receive of their performances.

"Wait till it's done," answered Tom.

Writing a letter was no joke for Thomas Bradley, junior.

"How on earth do you spell *circus*?" he asked.

"S-u-r-k-e-ss," answered Bess, promptly.

"No you don't!" cried Tom. "I know better."

"If you know so much why do you ask?" retorted Bess.

"Oh come, Bess! do think, can't you?"

"There's a *c* in it," put in Archie; "for I saw the big red-and-blue posters in the village, and I know there was a *c* in circus."

"Then its c-u-r-k-i-s," said Bess.

"Yes! I guess that's right," said Tom, thoughtfully, writing the word and then holding his head back from the paper, first on one side and then on the other, to see if it looked natural spelt in that way.

"I'm not exactly sure," he said at last. "It looks kinder queer. And mamma does make such a row if I don't spell right! What's the use in spelling, anyway? If the folks know what you mean, that's enough—one way is as good as another. Pshaw!" he continued, "I don't believe it is right. See here, Bob! you're a first-rate little boy—a real regular first-rate good boy, you are!"

"If it's upstairs, I won't," declared Bob, who knew that flattery always preceded errands. Bob was one of the kind who learned by experience.

"Oh yes, Bobby! That's a lovely harness you've made for Winky. I couldn't have done better myself. You know where my dictionary is, up in my room, on the table. Run along and get it, that's a good boy."

Bob kept on with his work.

"Come, Bobby," said Tom, encouragingly.

"Go yourself," was Bob's polite suggestion.

"Oh, I'm so tired. I've done nothing but run for doctors all day long. Come, Bob, I'll

tell mamma what a good boy you are, if you will."

"Won't you tell her I dropped the tea-pot down the well?" asked Bob.

"Oh! did you?" cried Tom, Bess, and Archie, all in a breath.

Bob nodded his head, and looked at them all with a calm stare.

"Which one?" asked the three children, anxiously.

"The big silver one," said Bob.

"How? Why? What were you doing with it?" said the astonished chorus of voices.

"Wilson wouldn't lend me the watering-pot, and I wanted to water my garden, so I just thought that would do instead. And I went to fill it at the well, and the bucket hit it right over into the well. It was the bucket's fault. I ain't to blame!"

The children looked at each other without speaking—then at papa, who still slept. "Whe-euw!" at last whistled Tom.

"If you won't tell mamma, I'll go for your book," said Bob.

"Well, I won't tell her in this letter, anyway."

"Don't tell her at all," insisted Bob.

"If you don't go right off and get it, I'll write it this moment," declared Tom, pretending to scribble furiously.

"I'll go, I'll go!" cried Bob, and away he ran.

"That's the worst scrape yet," said Bess. 'For if I did get lost, I was found again; and if I did tear my clothes, they're all mended now; and if Archie did break his arm, he's got it mended now, too; but the teapot! That's dropped down the well, and there it is!"

Bessie's arguments were convincing; there was no more to be said.

"Wow! wow! wow! Tom! Bess! come!" screamed Bob's voice, in deadly terror, from the hall. Out rushed Mr. Bradley, suddenly roused from sleep, followed by the children. There lay Bob, all in a huddle at the foot of the stairs, down which he had just rolled.

"What's the matter, Bobby?" asked his father.

"Oh!" gasped Bob, "I'm so scared! there's a ghost upstairs in Tom's room," and he hid his eyes and sobbed.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Bradley, going upstairs.

"Oh, Tom, don't you go!" cried Bess, seeing her brother about to follow.

"Fiddlesticks' ends!" said Tom, running after his father as hard as he could.

Arrived in the room, even Mr. Bradley started, for there, at the foot of the bed, stood a tall

white figure. He walked up to it, and gave it a punch in its ghostly stomach. Instantly there fell to the ground three pillows, Tom's nightgown, and a broom. Somebody had evidently dressed this figure to frighten Tom.

Mr. Bradley was too indignant to laugh. He loved fun, but he hated this kind of a joke and had often forbidden anything of the kind. He now marched downstairs solemnly, to question the household and discover who it was that had done this. On his way, however, to the kitchen, he stopped to reassure Bob, who was moaning with his head in Bessie's lap.

As soon as the explanation was given, he raised his head and his face was as red as fire. "How mean!" said he. "I meant to scare Tom, and I forgot I did it, and got scared myself!"

"Did you dress up that thing to frighten Tom?" asked Mr. Bradley, sternly. Bob hung his head.

"I forgot," he faltered.

"Go to bed," said his father. "Don't let me see you again this evening."

Bob burst into a prolonged howl. "I'm so afraid, I don't want to go alone," he whimpered.

"You deserve to be afraid, you cowardly boy," said his father, indignantly. "Now go. You meant to frighten your brother, and you are well punished. Go at once!"

Bob went off, and his wailing increased as he slowly withdrew.

"Oh, papa, let me go with him," begged Tom ; "he is so scared. He didn't mean to do any harm. Pshaw! he couldn't scare me!"

"No," said Mr. Bradley, "you may not go ; sit down and finish your letter." So Tom sat down.

"Poor little beggar! how he howls! It's too bad ; he didn't mean any harm!" soliloquized Tom.

But Bess had slipped away without waiting to ask permission. "What would be the use?" she said to herself. "Of course papa would have to say no ; so I'll go without asking, and then it won't be disobedience."

Bess sat by Bob's bed, and instead of scolding him she said mildly,—

"We've none of us been very good to-day, Bob, and you've been worst of all ; but never mind, go to sleep ; to-morrow we'll fish for the teapot."

And Bob, whose conscience troubled him but little now that he had a light and company, curled himself up comfortably and went to sleep.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bradley sat below and wrote to his wife. Here is his letter :—

"DEAR MARY,—We are all quite well, and

although we miss you greatly, we get along admirably ; so do not hurry home, as you suggest. You do not often take a holiday, so let this be a good one. Everything is as usual. Archie had a little tumble, and hurt his arm slightly, but it is a trifle. He sits by me eating apples, and sends his love to you. Bob and Bess have gone to bed. Tom is writing to you. All is serene in the kitchen. I cannot imagine, dear Mary, what it is that fatigues you so much in house-keeping ; it must be that you are very feeble. Perhaps you had better see some good physician while you are in the city, and consult him about yourself. Everything goes on like clockwork in your absence ; and although I appreciate your loving care of us all, dear Mary, I cannot help thinking that you wear yourself out unnecessarily, when I see how quietly all things go on without you. I do not say this to disparage your efforts in the least, but only in the hope of convincing you that what I have so often said is true—that you take too much trouble for us all, darling ; and in future you must spare yourself. Enjoy all you can in the city ; and when you are ready to return, be sure you will find the most loving welcome from your

“ HUSBAND.

“ P.S.—The children are very good, and clean.”

Now here is Tom's letter, which Mr. Bradley did not see:—

“DEER MAMMA,—I do hope your better than wen you went away. I wish you was home. It is so quere here without you. But if your haveing a good time, stay as long as you like. I dare say we will get along sumhow or ruther, til you get home. We have dun a good menny bad things. Bess got lost in the woods, and most drowned in Rainy Pond ; Ned the idjut boy saved her life. I shot Kate thru the head with a squirt of water, and most killed her. Archy broke his arm trying to wride the trik mule at the curkis. Bob has dun worst of all, but I sed I woodn't tel that. Bob has dun a dredful thing, but I sed I woodn't tel, so I won't. It's orful. Papa has been away most of the time at the fare. He is very good to us, and don't make us wash too much. The bred is orful ; Maggy is cross. But we're all wel, except Archy's arm, and Dr. Jarvis sais if he don't get fever he wil get wel. I send my luv, and so does Bess. I wish you was home. Your loveing son,

“TOM.

“P.S.—You wil feel orful bad about what Bob's dun.”

CHAPTER VI.

FISHING IN THE WELL.

"I SEE it, I see it!" cried Tom, eagerly, balancing himself perilously over the well-curb. "It's down at the bottom!"

"Did you suppose it would float?" asked Bess, with a touch of scorn in her tones.

"Let me see," cried Bob, pushing forward.

"You clear out," said Archie; "you've made all this mischief; you'd better go before you tumble in yourself, you little goose."

Archie's arm felt very stiff to-day, and his temper was slightly damaged too. All four children were gathered around the well, at the bottom of which lay the silver teapot, like truth, bright and shining, but apparently not to be recovered by mortals.

Mr. Bradley had gone to the village, and the children were determined to get the silver teapot up before his return; for as yet they had not thought it necessary to mention its disappearance, and Mr. Bradley was not the man to notice its absence.

"Of course, if it was lost we should have to tell," Bess had said to her brother; "but as long as we know where it is, and that it's safe, there's no need to say anything about it."

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Archie. "I can't go after it, with my broken arm."

"Now, I suppose we will hear of nothing but your broken arm for a month, and you'll shirk everything for it. 'I can't study 'cause my arm's broken; I can't go errands 'cause my arm's broken; I can't go to church 'cause my arm's broken;' that will be your whine, Archie; but don't try your dodges on me, for I won't stand it. If it really hurts you, I'm sorry, and I'll lick any fellow that touches you till you get well again; but none of your humbug. Of course you can't go down the well; you couldn't if your arm wasn't broken."

This was from Tom.

Meanwhile Bess had gone to the house for a long fishing-pole, and soon returned carrying it.

"We'll fasten a hook to the end of it, and fish the teapot up," said she.

"Ho, ho! Do you suppose it will bite like a fish?" laughed Tom.

"No, I do not, Tom Bradley. But I suppose if I tie a string to the pole, and fasten an iron hook to one end, with a stone to keep it down that I can wiggle it round in the water till the hook catches in the handle, and then we can drag it up; that's what I suppose," answered Bess, preparing to carry out her design.

"There's something in that, Bess ; you're not so stupid as you look. Give me the pole and let me try."

"No, go and get one for yourself."

"Where will I find the hook?"

"In the smoke house, where I got mine."

"Oh, get me one too," cried Bob.

"And me one too," cried Archie.

Before half an hour had passed, the four children, all armed with fishing-poles, were intently wiggling in the water, catching their hooks in the stones by the side of the well, entangling their lines, digging their elbows into each other's sides, in their frantic attempts to pull their hooks loose, scolding, pushing, and getting generally excited.

Every few moments Tom would pull Bess back by her sun-bonnet, and save her from tumbling over in her eagerness ; but so far from being grateful to her deliverer, Bess resented the treatment indignantly.

"Stop jerking my head so," she cried.

"You'll be in, in a minute ; you'd have been in then if I hadn't jerked you," answered Tom.

"Well, what if I had ! Let me alone. If I go in, that's my own look out."

"Your own look in, you mean ; my gracious ! wouldn't you astonish the toads down there ! But you'd get your face clean."

"Now, Tom, you let me be ; I 'most had it that time !"

"So you've said forty times. This is all humbug. I'm going down on the rope for it."

"Oh, no, Tom, please don't ; indeed, you'll be drowned ; the rope will break ; you'll kill yourself ; you'll catch cold," cried Bess, in alarm. She could fight Tom all day long, when in the mood for it ; but to see him deliberately rush into danger, or to contemplate the fact that a hair of his precious head might perhaps be hurt, was more than our intrepid Bess could bear.

"Pooh ! girl ! coward !" retorted thankless Tom, pointing the finger of scorn at his sister. "Who's afraid of that ? Stand back, small boys ; I'm going in," and Tom began to divest himself of his jacket.

"You'll poison the water," suggested Archie.

"It will be so cold," moaned Bob. But nobody took any notice of Bob ; he was treated with great contempt, and much hustled, as the author of the mischief. All felt that if Tom came to grief, Bob would be answerable.

"I'll scream for a hundred years without stopping, Tom," cried Bess wildly. "You shan't go down, you shan't ; I'll call some one. Murray ! Peter ! Maggie ! c-o-o-o-o-o-o-me ! O-o-o-oh, c-o-o-o-o-me !"

“Stop screaming, and help,” said Tom, who had his shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbow, and his pantaloons to his knee—why, no one but Tom could tell. “Now do you three hold on tight to this bucket ; don’t let go for a moment ; pull away as hard as you can when I tell you to. Now for it !”

And, without more ado, Tom clung to the other rope with his hands, and twisted his feet around the bucket-handle. “Hold on tight, and let me down easy,” said Tom, and the three children clung desperately to their rope, and lowered him little by little. Long experience in rescuing cats from a watery grave in the well had taught the children how to manage the ropes and buckets, but they had not calculated on the fact that Tom would be heavier than a cat ; and it was with red faces and straining muscles that they dragged away on their rope. However, they were able to keep Tom steady, and he, clinging with one hand to his rope, and pushing himself away from the sides of the well with the other, made his dangerous descent as successfully as though his coadjutors had been gifted with Samson’s strength. A sudden splash and shiver told them he had reached water, and a shout of triumph declared that the teapot was rescued.

As Tom shouted, all three children let go the

rope and rushed to the side of the well to look at the victorious hero.

It was a most fortunate circumstance that the water in the well was low, and that Tom, plunged suddenly to the bottom by this unexpected movement, was able, after much scrambling, to stand upright with his head out of water; otherwise the earthly career of Thomas Bradley would have been brought to a sudden and untimely end.

As it was, he stood in the cold water up to his shoulders, clinging still to his rope, holding the teapot with one hand, and wildly vociferating to his admiring audience, whose heads hung over the well-curb, and their faces, as seen in this position by Tom, looked like those of grinning fiends.

"What made you let go?" roared Tom, and his voice sounded hollow and unnatural as it resounded from the depths of his cool and shady retreat.

"Oh, Tom, have you got it? Have you, really! Ain't it cold? Are you hurt? Were you scared? Is the teapot broken?" were a few of the questions that came faintly to him from above, and sounded very unlike angel whispers to the diver for teapots, who stood first on one leg, then on the other, to prevent equal cramp in both.

"Draw me up! You silly children! You goose of a Bess! Why don't you draw me up?"

"We're so tired?" called down Archie. "I helped to lower you with only one arm, but I can't drag any more. My arm's broken."

"Bess! draw me up, I tell you!" screamed Tom from below.

"I will, Tom, I'm going to," answered Bess, who now reached up and recovered the bucket, that had flown with a jerk to the top of the well-roof when it had been so suddenly abandoned.

But all the united efforts of Bess and Bob, and Archie's left arm, could not raise Tom. After a desperate tug he was raised an inch, and suddenly lowered again. The result was a splash, a scramble below, and Tom's voice sputtering incoherent invectives. Again and again the children tugged, and again and again Tom splashed, scrambled, and sputtered.

At last a red, anxious face looked down to him, and Bessie's voice, choked with tears, called out,—

"Oh, Tom, do hold on till I call Maggie; we can't get you up."

Away ran Bess to call help, followed by Archie; but Bob, whose idcas on some points were as yet but feebly developed, seized one of the long

poles, and began to poke at his brother with it, under the impression that some good would come of these unaided efforts.

"Bob! be done! You'll put my eye out!" cried poor Tom, desperately, as the swinging iron hook circled around his head.

"Catch hold! catch hold!" cried Bob, getting excited as he saw how near he came to grappling his brother.

"Just let me get up once, and I'll catch hold," muttered Tom, wrathfully; then raising his voice he yelled as loud as he could for help. "Pete! P-e-e-e-e-ter! P-e-e-e-e-e-ter!"

But Peter was a mile away, and consequently could not hear. Maggie had improved the occasion of her master's absence to visit her friend and neighbour Miss Flaherty for half an hour; and Kate, summoned from her baking, came to the rescue, but only assisted by wringing her hands and wailing.

"Och, he's lost wid the cold! Shure an' he'll git his death now! Arrah, what childer yez arre!"

"Take hold of the rope and pull," cried Bess.

"I couldn't rise him; shure an' I'd only pull him up be snaps, and drop him again," said Kate, who showed a lamentable want of confidence in her own abilities.

"Oh, do something!" cried Bess, now almost beside herself with fear; "do something, Kate. Oh, where is Murray?"

"Garn for a load o' wood, and won't be home till night," answered Kate.

"Oh, Tom, can't you shinny up the rope?" called down Bess.

"No, I'm too stiff now with cold; besides, I couldn't do it any way," moaned the captive Tom, who looked like a Triton blowing on a conch-shell, as he stood with uplifted teapot. He seemed to think the teapot should be kept dry at all hazards, and wearied his arm to keep it above water.

"I'll run next door and call Mr. Wilson," said Bess, more hopefully, and started on this errand; while Kate, suddenly inspired, rushed to the kitchen sink, where stood the iron pump, connected by a pipe with the well, and began to pump vigorously, apparently with the anticipation of seeing Tom ooze through the spout, for which purpose, and to make the matter surer, she removed the filter.

As Bess ran she was suddenly stopped at the gate by the sight of a carriage which had just driven up, and out of which now stepped Aunt Maria and Aunt Maria's husband, Uncle Daniel. These were the very grimmest and grandest of all the relations. When they came to see

mamma, Bess had always to sit perfectly still on a chair, answer very politely, have her very best dress on, her hair parted directly in the middle, and be intensely proper. As for the boys, they suffered the torture by soap and water, and endured their new jackets, could not whittle, nor whistle, nor wrestle, and were only sustained under these tribulations by the knowledge that there would be a very good dinner, and a "bully" dessert!

The white and gold china always came out on these occasions, the best double-damask tablecloth and napkins, the heaviest silver forks and spoons, the silver salt-cellars, and—oh, agony of agonies!—the silver teapot!

For one awful moment Bess stood stunned. Then her anxiety for Tom overcame every other consideration, and, before Aunt Maria could say, "How do you do, Elizabeth?" she had caught her uncle by his august coat-tail, and in a piteous voice besought him to come and pull on the rope.

"Pull on a rope, Elizabeth!" said Uncle Daniel, in mild astonishment; "why should I pull on a rope, my dear?" and Aunt Maria murmured, "Very astonishing thing for a child to say."

"Oh, come quick! hurry faster! Tom's down in the well!" cried Bess, with freely flowing tears.

"Tom down a well! And how did he get there?"

Uncle Daniel never hurried, and required a reason, always, for the hope that was in his friends.

"He went down for the teapot," sobbed Bess, "the silver teapot, and we can't pull him up again; and he's all cramped with cold. Oh, do hurry!"

"The silver teapot down the well; my mother's silver teapot! Daniel, didn't I always say that Mary Bradley should never have had that teapot? This must be looked to."

And, with dignified strides, Aunt Maria marched to the well.

Tom's teeth by this time were chattering so that he fully expected they would all drop out; and the three fishers were so completely demoralised by their fears as to be speechless.

Uncle Daniel was a slow man. He leisurely looked down at Tom, then up at the wheel, then at the rope, and calmly remarked, "All new, I see." Then he slowly took off his coat, and as slowly carried it into the house, stopped to give an order to his coachman, who had driven around to the stable, and came with measured pace to where the three frightened children stood listening to Aunt Maria, who was doing her duty by them strictly and fully.

Uncle Daniel then took hold of the rope, gave a long, strong, calm pull, and, in an instant, Tom, "dripping with coolness, arose from the well."

CHAPTER VII.

AUNT MARIA.

DID you ever hear of the man who leaped from the river-bank to escape the tiger, and found himself near the jaws of a crocodile? Have you ever heard the saying, "Out of the frying-pan into the fire"? Have you ever realised the full meaning of this saying? If not, you cannot imagine Tom's sensations, when, after scrambling over the well-curb, he found himself face to face with his deliverer, and in one dreadful moment recognised Uncle Daniel and Aunt Maria.

Sounds had reached him faintly in the under world, and he had supposed it was Mr. Wilson's friendly arm that had raised him from his low estate.

He absolutely forgot to chatter his teeth, and the precious teapot would have fallen from his grasp, but that Aunt Maria seized it, instantly collared him, and without a word marched him into the house.

Tom never once thought of resisting; his

spirit was chill and faint; and Aunt Maria, it was universally conceded, had a master mind.

Passively he yielded to her commands, and slowly turned around and around before the kitchen fire, dripping water all over the hearth-stone, like an enormous turkey simmering in its own fat. His mother had once described to him the method pursued with geese when a *pâte de foie gras* was required. A distinct recollection of the process now rushed over him. "They make the poor goose walk before a hot fire, and keep giving it drink, till its liver becomes unnaturally large, and finally bursts," mamma had said.

Oh, could it be that Aunt Maria would keep him turning before this fire till his liver burst? It looked like it—and—yes—here she came with a bowl full of drink! Mercy! mercy!

"Drink it all, immediately!" said Aunt Maria, in her sternest tone. Tom obediently took the hot bowl; he felt that even should he burst then and there, Aunt Maria must be obeyed. With many a gulp and grimace, Tom finally reached the bottom of the bowl. Herb tea is a good thing, and peculiarly adapted to the use of boys who go down wells. Tom began to steam outwardly and distend inwardly. "Oh, mamma!" was his mental cry, but he uttered no sound. "Keep on moving," was Aunt Maria's next com-

mand. "It won't do for you to keep still an instant ; go on turning till you are thoroughly heated."

Tom twirled about three times more ; then he felt the blood rush to his head ; he stopped, glared wildly at Aunt Maria, and in a tone of defiance called out,—

"I won't burst my liver for you ! or anyone like you !" and before Mrs. Daniel Hampton could recover breath he had rushed past her, overset a chair, sent the cat spinning to the extreme end of the kitchen, slammed the door, and made his escape to his own room, where he locked and doubled-locked himself in, snorting with defiance, and puffing like a high-pressure steam-engine.

"I'll stay here till she goes," said Tom, as he kicked off his wet clothes, and wrestled himself into a clean, dry shirt. "And, confound her picture, I'll pay her up some day !" he added, as he thrust his legs into dry pantaloons, and flung his wet jacket at the looking-glass. "Clear out !" he cried wrathfully, as he heard a knock at the door.

"Oh, Tom, it's me ! Bess ! Do let me in !" implored his sister through the keyhole.

"Anyone with you ?"

"No, indeed ; let me in. I've got a cake for you," whispered Bess, her mouth at the

crack. Tom opened the door very cautiously. Bess whisked in, and hastily set her back against it, as Tom relocked it.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"Oh, it's awful! Worse than you can think, Tom! she's poking round into everything—everything—pot closet, china closet, sideboard, dresser, even to the closet under the sink; and there she found three of mamma's nice napkins, that Maggie had wiped dishes on and thrown there; and Kate's awfully afraid of her, and has told her everything she's asked about. All about your squirting her ear, and Archie's breaking his arm, and Maggie's gadding about, and just what the butcher's bill was last week; and she's made Bob and Archie sit on two chairs in the middle of the room, where she can watch them. She says she's going to tell papa of you as soon as ever he comes in, and have you punished for disrespect; and she sent me upstairs to get our tooth-brushes; I'm afraid she's going to scrub us and brush us."

Bessie's voice and manner indicated abject fear. Tom, with the door locked, and the use of his legs, was bold. "Don't go down," he counselled. "Stay here with me till she's gone. Pooh! I'm not afraid of papa! He won't say a word. Why, what have I done? Went down well to get the teapot that Bob dropped; and

then wouldn't stand before a fire till I split my liver! Humph! Papa wouldn't, either!"

"I'm not so sure, Tom, that he wouldn't if Aunt Maria told him to. You know he's just as afraid as any of us."

"Well, let him, then, if he likes; I won't."

"Give me your tooth-brush, Tom; I must go back," sighed Bess.

"I don't know where it is, I'm sure," said Tom, indifferently. "I haven't seen it since the day after mamma went away. Don't you go back, Bess," he added eagerly. "Stay here with me; we'll have lots of fun. I've got my pea-shooter here, and if she comes near the door I'll shoot her through the keyhole. We'll make a fort of the room, and defend ourselves; and to-night I'll scramble down the piazza roof and into the kitchen pantry-window, and get something to eat. She'll go early in the morning, for there's nothing fit to eat in the house, you know; and we can talk papa round easy enough after she's gone."

Bess was sorely tempted; this was a delicious plan; what fun it would be, to be sure! But the memory of her two little brothers, sitting disconsolate in the middle of the room, under immediate supervision of that sharp eye, moved her to pity.

"I can't leave Bob and Archie," she said, dole-

fully. "It would be too mean; they'd catch all my share. No, I'll go down. But you stay here, Tom; and if you let a string down out of your window, I'll fill a basket with food, and you can draw it up for dinner. Oh, do find that everlasting tooth-brush, Tom; she'll make me hunt for it if you don't."

"Well, let me think where I did put it last. I plugged the window with it one night, when it was windy and the sash rattled, but it's not there now. Then I stirred lemonade with the handle in my mug; no, it's not there. Where on earth has it gone to? Oh, yes! now I know! Look out in the lettuce-bed for it; I guess it's there."

"In the lettuce-bed!" cried Bess.

"Yes! I threw it out of the window at the cat, in the night, and I guess it went about as far as the lettuce-bed."

"Oh dear, what will I do? She will see me going there for it. Well," and Bess sighed, "good-bye, Tom. When I whistle under your window, come and draw up the basket. I do wish you could get your brush; I know I'll never find it."

"If you don't, just say I swallowed it in a hurry this morning," called Tom after his sister, as she slowly departed; and then he retired to his city of refuge and amused himself with his drawing and paint-box; but I grieve to say, in-

stead of peaceful landscapes, the talent of the artist showed itself chiefly in caricature, and the faces of the various beasts and birds that filled the paper all bore a hideous resemblance to his father's eldest sister. "Shades of the prison-house" were manifestly closing "upon the growing boy."

Meanwhile, Bess had returned to her aunt, after hastily brushing her hair, and found her in the parlour, dusting the clock carefully, her nose and the tips of her fingers expressing disgust.

"Sit down," she said to Bess, who sat down. Mrs. Hampton soon finished her displeasing task, shook the duster out of the window, hung it up in the pantry, and returned to the children, who were uneasily eyeing each other askance.

"Show me the tooth-brushes," said she. Bess produced them. Mrs. Hampton received them grimly, and examined them. "Bone dry, as I expected," was her comment. "When did you use yours last, Elizabeth?"

"Day before yesterday—no, two days ago," faltered Bess.

"And you?" to Archie. "Last week; but I can't brush my teeth, 'cause I've broken my arm."

"And you, sir!" to Bob, who wriggled about like a worm on a hook, and said he didn't know.

"Disgraceful!" said Aunt Maria. "There are only three here; where is Tom's?"

"Out in the lettuce-bed," answered Bess, who, like the father of her country, could not tell a lie, and had no genius even for prevarication. This had to be explained.

"He threw it at a cat in the night," she faltered. "That boy will end on the gallows," declared Aunt Maria solemnly; but she forbore to send for him,—whether in the fear that he might fulfil her prediction prematurely by the immediate slaughter of herself, or because she had work enough in hand, was undecided.

Bess at least had reason to suppose herself among the prophets, for her vision was quickly fulfilled, and the young Bradleys received such a soaping, scrubbing, and brushing at the hands of Aunt Maria, that they never forgot it, though they "lived to be old." Scarcely was it over, when a merry whistle was heard outside, and Bess sprang like a deer from the room, and met her father, who was returning from the village on horseback.

"Take me up," she cried, and with his help sprang lightly up before him in the saddle.

"Papa," she cried, breathlessly, dreading every moment to see her aunt's tall form approaching. "Papa, Aunt Maria's come, and Uncle Daniel, and it's awful! But you mustn't believe her;

she's going to tell tales of us, specially Tom, and she says he'll end on the gallows because he didn't brush his teeth, and wouldn't split his liver; and Tom only went down well to get the teapot, and he got it so nice and clever, and we couldn't get him up again, and they caught us at it, and Aunt Maria found the house like a pig-sty, she says, and she's scrubbed us so!"

Bess paused for breath.

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Bradley.

"Yes, it's whew, indeed!" cried Bess, encouraged by her father's sympathy. "But you must promise not to punish Tom, papa, for he didn't do any harm at all; only wouldn't turn round before the fire till he was done—no, cooked—no, dry, I mean. It was too hot; no one could; so say you won't do anything to Tom; promise, papa, promise!"

And Bess hugged her father so tight that he could scarcely breathe.

"I won't punish him, of course, if he's done nothing wrong," said Mr. Bradley, memory recurring to his own motherless boyhood, and his sister Maria's method of "bringing him up by hand."

"But get down, Bess, and tell Kate to hurry dinner; I'm dreadfully hungry. I'll be right in. Where's Tom?"

"Locked up in his room, and he says he won't

come out till Aunt Maria's gone. Papa, you'd better let me tell you all the bad things we've done since mamma's been gone, because Aunt Maria has found them all out, and if she sees you don't know about them, she will say you don't take care of us," counselled Bess.

"No, run along, and hurry dinner, and tell the girls to put on the extra touches that your mother does when she's home. I'll be right in. You must be more respectful, Bess, when you speak of your Aunt Maria."

Bess obeyed her father and ran in, and there was none but old Dick, the horse, to observe the expression of Mr. Bradley's countenance, as he unharnessed him and gave him his freedom. Bess, having secured rights and immunities for Tom, returned to his room, and conveyed the fact to him through the keyhole.

"Don't care," said Tom; "I shan't come down."

"Oh, do, Tom; it will be so dreadful without you. Why, I wouldn't leave you, if you wanted help."

"She'll scrub me," answered the heir of the Bradleys.

"Don't come till dinner's on table, and then she won't have time," counselled Bess, the adviser.

"What's for dinner, Bess?"

"That's what I don't know. I'm awfully afraid there's nothing but pork and beans. Oh, come, do, Tom; think of papa."

"Maybe she'll scold him,—well, I don't know,—it would be fun to hear her peg away at papa,—maybe I'll come,—I'll see."

"That's real good of you, Tom," cried Bess, admiringly. "I know you wouldn't leave me; and Tom, do please brush your hair only just this once, for mamma's sake, and put on your red cravat, won't you?"

"No, I won't! If I brush my hair, that's enough; so there's no use talking any more about that. I say, Bess, did she say anything about mamma? If she did, I'll punch her head!"

"Oh, Tom!" cried Bess, breathless at this blasphemy against Aunt Maria. "How can you talk so?"

"Easy enough. What did she say?"

"She said mamma had no faculty, and didn't know how to bring us up right at all."

"I say, Bess, I won't, I won't, I won't stand that!" and with each "won't" Tom levelled a blow at his innocent feather pillow, and pomelled it into a shapeless mass.

"Take that, and that, and that!" he cried, as he wreaked his vengeance against his aunt on the unoffending pillow. Bess ran away for

fear Tom would take back his promise of coming to dinner, and reached the parlour just in time to hear Aunt Maria say to her father,—

“However painful it may be to my feelings, I shall stay here, Thomas, till your wife returns. Such mismanagement, such untidiness, such a shocking state of things I could not believe if I did not see it with my own eyes.”

“Good gracious, sister, don’t keep on about your eyes,” cried Mr. Bradley, in a tone of exasperation; “whose eyes should you see with, except your own? There’s no need for you to stay at all, unless you want to; the children and I will do well enough. Come, now, be good-natured, and come to dinner.”

Uncle Daniel was summoned from his book, and dinner commenced. A very frugal meal it was, compared to the luxurious repasts Mrs. Bradley was accustomed to set before her sister-in-law. Aunt Maria expressed herself freely, and gave an unbiassed opinion as to the style of cooking she now saw. Tom had crept in unperceived, and taken his seat by his sister. When at last a very ruinous pudding was sent on for dessert, and placed upon the table while the meat still stood there, Aunt Maria was literally overcome.

This was monstrous! This was tremendous!

"Thomas Bradley !" said she, between a groan and a gasp, "you may not wish it, but I am your daughter's godmother, and morally responsible, and I shall remain here until your wife returns."

"I'm off, Bess !" whispered Tom, during his father's reply.

"Oh, where are you going ?" asked poor Bess, who in her mind's eye already saw Tom running off to sea.

"I'll telegraph mamma to come right home," he replied ; and without waiting for the pudding, Tom slipped away from the table, and was soon on the road to the village.

CHAPTER VIII.

REBELLION.

AS soon as the uncomfortable dinner was over, Aunt Maria announced her intention of going into the kitchen and superintending Kate. She gave Bess a duster to hem, Archie a tract to read, and Bob his arithmetic book, with the injunction that "nine times" was to be learned thoroughly before he should be allowed to go out.

"I will drive to the village in my own carriage this afternoon, and attend to some business

I have there. If you are very good children I will take you with me."

With these words Aunt Maria sailed into the kitchen, and left three awe-stricken young ones behind her, sitting stiffly where she had placed them, their faces betraying mingled terror and resentment. Mr. Bradley had invited Uncle Daniel to go over the farm with him, an invitation which the children heard with despair; for if papa left them alone with Aunt Maria, they felt that they were lost indeed.

However, so it was, and there they must sit all the afternoon! And oh! how bright the sun was, and how blue the sky was, and how red the apples were, and how yellow the pears! Surely no torture of the Inquisition could be more painful than this! To sit in a best parlour on a sunny, clear, fresh, beautiful October day, with all nature calling to them—how could the little Bradleys stand it? Why, they never were able to stay indoors more than an hour at a time, be the weather ever so bad. Even on Sundays mamma let them read their books under the trees, and always let them race three times around the barn (to let off steam, as she said) after coming from church.

And this wasn't Sunday! It was Thursday. What business had Aunt Maria to make them sit indoors on a Thursday?

"Nine times one are nine, nine times two are ten," drawled Bob, with his eyes on the window, through which he saw a flock of crows alighting on one of the gorgeous maples in the next field.

"No such thing," said Archie. "And don't study out loud, Bob," added Bess, as she drearily pulled her needle through her work. "Oh, dear! If we're good we'll have to drive with her," suddenly suggested Archie. "Bob, let's be as bad as ever we can be."

"All right!" said Bob, balancing his book for a moment on his boot-toe, and then dexterously kicking it to the end of the room. "What shall we do first? I'm ready."

At that moment Aunt Maria's step was heard. Bob ran like a lamplighter for his book, and began a vigorous course of study. But the step passed by the door; it was a false alarm. "Hieu! coward!" said Archie. "I'm not," retorted Bob. "Afraid of your aunt!" sneered Archie. "You're just as bad," cried Bob. "Both of you be still," said Bess. "Now I'll tell you something good. Tom's gone to telegraph for mamma to come home right away; so she'll be home to-morrow night. Let's be good if we can, till then, and show Aunt Maria that mamma does know how to bring us up right."

"Did she say we weren't brought up right?" asked Archie. Bess nodded. Archie looked darkly at Bob, and with his thumb indicated a retreat towards the door. Bob accepted the signal, once more threw down his book, and in an instant the room was freed of boys; and Bess, looking up from the knot in her thread, saw through the window the escaped victims, and heard their wild, defiant whoops as they swiftly made their way to the barn.

"Now, then," said she, "that's downright mean, when I stayed with them all through it, and didn't even run off with Tom because of them! Just like boys! I wonder what they'll do? Something dreadful, I do believe."

Nothing but the thought that her mother's reputation for "faculty" was at stake could have kept Bess from then and there following Tom; but she felt that she, at least, must be good, or Aunt Maria might have some little show of reason and right when she declared that they were the worst-behaved children she ever had seen in all her life. So Bess sat quietly, sighing heavily, and sewing steadily, until a great noise in the kitchen attracted her; and as it grew louder and louder, she was persuaded that it was her duty to go and see what the commotion was.

She found Aunt Maria occupying the centre

of the kitchen. Before her stood Kate, her arms akimbo, her face red, her attitude expressing defiance, while sitting in the rocking-chair was Miss Maggie, in her best bonnet and shawl. It was evident that she had just returned from her friendly call on her neighbour, and was gradually taking in the full force of the awful fact that Aunt Maria had come to reign over her. Equally evident it was that Kate had determined on rebellion, and civil war was raging.

“An’ I’ll bear no more from ye!” screamed Kate, as Bess entered the kitchen. “Ye’d try the patience of a saint. Git out of me kitchen, ye ould dragon, or I’ll tie the dish-clout to ye! Ye’ve dhriven me mad! Look Mag! look at what she’s did! All me dishes set out of me closet; all me pots and pans, that I’ve scoured bright, thrun round an me; all me soap-grease and me ragshag upset and turned out, and me drawers ransacked and rummaged! An’ calls herself a lady! The likes of her! To go pokin’ round in another’s house, askin’ questions, an’ scoldin’ an’ scrubbin’ the poor childer, and bullying the masther! Aaaaah!” This last was so expressive an expletive that Aunt Maria’s stout heart quailed, and she beat a hasty retreat. Unfortunate Mr. Bradley, coming along at that moment with peaceful Uncle Daniel, was imme-

diately appealed to. In an excited voice Aunt Maria related all Kate's delinquencies to him, and ended by telling of her great disrespect to herself.

"And I insist upon it, Thomas," said Aunt Maria, "I insist upon it that you instantly dismiss that drunken Irishwoman. I will not allow her to remain another hour in this house while I am in it. I never was so insulted in all my born days—never in all my born days!"

"Oh, sister Maria," said Mr. Bradley, "can't you let things pass? I'm sorry the woman has been saucy, but do get along with it. You need not see her any more; there's no occasion for you to go into the kitchen and ——"

"Is there not?" demanded Mrs. Hampton, loftily. "That shows just how much you know about it. It may be your way, and your wife's way, to keep out of the kitchen. From what I have seen to-day I should suppose it might be. But let me tell you, Thomas, it's not my way. Just look at your house! Such dirt! Look at your kitchen! I could not have believed it! I came here to pass a quiet, happy day and night with you. What do I find? Tom and the teapot down well! My mother's teapot! And you very well know that teapot should have been mine. Down well! And your son nearly chilled to death, and your children in a condi-

tion I cannot even think of ; and your house ! And such a dinner ! And to crown all, your drunken cook insults me,—calls me an old dragon ! Thomas, I assure you I never shall overlook it, never, if that woman is allowed to remain ! You owe me something, I think ; your children may possibly owe me something ; but I do not wish to speak of obligations, though no one can ever tell what I suffered and went through with when you were a boy. I brought you up, Thomas, and I reared you, when all the doctors gave you up ; and I slaved for you all my young life ; and now in my old age to be insulted in your house !” Here Aunt Maria gave way and sobbed.

Mr. Bradley groaned within himself. He called himself a man of peace ; there were those of his acquaintance who had been known to call him indolent ; but certainly all agreed that he was good-natured and easy-going. Here was a climax. The time had come for him to exert himself. But what would he do ?

“Maria,” he began, “if you know the trouble Mary has had in getting good servants, you would not ask me to dismiss one in her absence. Kate has a hasty temper, it is true, but she is a good woman nevertheless. Don’t make it a personal matter, or I shall have to dismiss her. Just overlook it for once, like a dear good

sister, and I'll see that she is more respectful hereafter."

"Thomas, you were always weak, but now you are lamentably so. I will make it a personal matter. I will not overlook it. Have I lived to my age to be called a dragon? Yes, and an old dragon, and be threatened with a dish-cloth! I never will overlook it. I have been insulted in your house, and unless that woman is instantly dismissed, I'll never set foot inside your doors again. Was it for this that I brought you up so carefully, and wore myself out over you when you had the croup, and the measles, and the whooping-cough, and the mumps, all in one year? Yes! and did my duty by you till you got married, and gave you a good lift in the world, too. Some brothers would think of all that, but not you: And now, in my old age, to be insulted in your house.——"

"Oh, take me to my peaceful gallows!" exclaimed Mr. Bradley; then starting up he faced his sister.

"Maria, if you'll promise never to speak of it again, I'll send Kate away at once; but for pity's sake don't say any more about it. I never could endure talking."

"I prefer action also," said Aunt Maria, grimly. Mr. Bradley heaved a sigh.

"Well, if I must, I must," said he, hoping that at last his sister would relent.

But no sign of relenting came, and he slowly took his way to the kitchen. The storm there had somewhat abated, but mutterings and growlings still told of a disturbed atmosphere. Mr. Bradley took a long breath, and began :—

"Kate, you have been very disrespectful to Mrs. Hampton, and I cannot allow your behaviour to pass unnoticed. I ——"

"Behaviour !" burst forth Kate ; "an' it's not to Mrs. Hampton I'll go to school for behaviour ; and, indade, Misther Bradley, what I've put up wid in her this day has broken me hear-r-rt ; wid her pokins about, and her snoopins around, and her axin' me questions, 'How much wages do I git?' and 'What's the butcher's bill?' an' the like ; not like a rale lady at all, at all, and not like the misthress aither. Oh, it's heart-broken I am wid her this day !" And Kate relapsed into tears.

"Arl me pots an' pans thrun round an' me, an' me place upset, an' she callin' me names,—Irish Biddy, an' the like,—an' sayin' me puddin' was bad, an' me bread was sour, an' it's likely it's her own self that turned it whin she intered the door."

It occurred to Mr. Bradley that his share in this conversation was but a small one, and that

he was apparently listening to abuse of his sister, instead of dismissing the abuser ; so he determined to cut it short.

"There is no need to say any more," said he: "You have been disrespectful, and you must go."

"Go, is it !" cried Kate, facing about, with mouth and eyes wide open. "Go ! Yis, faix, if that's your talk, I'll go fast enough. Ye'll pay me me whole month's wages, an' I'll lave to-night."

"No need of any hurry," began Mr. Bradley, but he was interrupted by Maggie.

"I'll lave, if you plase, sir, too. Kate and me is friends, an' if she goes, I'll go, too. Mrs. Dugan has been awantin' us, an' offerin' us higher wages for a month back ; but we wouldn't have left Mrs. Bradley, whose a swate good lady, an' no mistake ; but she's off now, and there's no livin' in the house wid Mrs. Hampton, an' I wish ye well, sir, and the childer, an' we'll just lave the house to oncet, sir. Whin the misthress comes she'll settle our wage ; and be plased to tell her, sir, it's none of our doings that ye're left so. Let Mrs. Hampton cook for ye, since she's so keen to be in the kitchen."

And with a giggle Maggie concluded her harangue. Mr. Bradley walked away with his hands in his pockets and his shoulders shrugged nearly up to his ears.

"Now then, Maria, I hope you're satisfied," said he. "I've dismissed Kate for you, and Maggie's going too, and they'll both leave to-night."

"To-night! And who'll get your breakfast for you?" asked Aunt Maria.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mr. Bradley, as he walked away. "That's woman's work. I've done my share; now you may run the concern as you choose."

Now, Aunt Maria never acknowledged herself defeated, and carried it loftily. She was, moreover, a lady of much resource and ample means. So she witnessed the departure of the two women with grim majesty, and sent Bess to tell her brothers they might come and recite their lessons. Bess was obliged to break the news of their departure. Aunt Maria primmed her mouth and said nothing; doubtless she thought the more. She summoned Uncle Daniel, and told him she would drive to the village, and that he had better order the carriage, which was done, and with poor Bess on the front seat she drove away, determined to engage a temporary cook in the village, and to buy bread, eggs, canned fruit, and other easily-prepared dishes, which would carry the family along until her tyranny should be overpast.

Bess had on her best bonnet and dress; she

had hastily mended her gloves and tied her shoes. She knew what was right, even if she did not always practise it—which may perhaps be a consoling thought to some mothers. Bess was glad to be out in the air, even though she rode in state, and she looked so pretty and ladylike that Aunt Maria really softened towards her, and told her that she should come and spend a week with her next Christmas.

“Not if I know it,” thought the demure Bess, but she said nothing. Aunt Maria then advised her to wear a back-board, for fear her shoulders might grow round, and suggested boarding-school and corsets, Latin grammar and oatmeal porridge, and various other dainties of this nature; so the time passed swiftly, and the horses trotted briskly, and they entered the village and drove up to the door of the largest house on the principal street.

This belonged to Mrs. Drew, an intimate and old friend of Mrs. Hampton. Bessie’s mother visited her, but was not fond of her, for Mrs. Drew always gave her many directions and much advice about the bringing up of her children; and Mrs. Bradley well knew that she and Aunt Maria discussed her affairs, and agreed in their opinion of her “faculty.” It behoved Bess to behave remarkably well here; and she realized this fact, and sat primly in

the window, looking into the street, her hands folded in her lap, the very picture of a good child.

Suddenly she gave a start, a cry, bounced up and down on the cushioned chair she was in, clasped her hands, looked nervously at Aunt Maria and Mrs. Drew, who were gossiping to their heart's content on the sofa, looked out of the window again, gave another little scream, and rushed tumultuously from the room and into the street, slamming the front-door violently behind her.

"What has the child seen?" cried Mrs. Drew, hastening to the window.

CHAPTER IX.

AUNT MARIA'S INDIGNATION.

THIS was what Bess had seen from Mrs. Drew's window : a crowd of boys coming along the street, evidently bent on some mischief. They seemed to be hustling and tormenting something or somebody in their midst, who or what, Bess had not at first seen ; but as they drew nearer, she heard a very sad, strange sound of crying or moaning, and, as the crowd parted for a moment, she caught sight of Ned, the poor idiot boy who had so recently saved her from drowning. His hands were tied behind his

back, his hat was knocked over his eyes, and he was shuffling along blinded and confused, in the midst of his tormentors, who pushed him about, taunted him, struck him, and tripped him up. They were evidently on their way to a neighbouring pump, and Bess instantly divined that they were about to duck him. No wonder she screamed and ran! But judge of Mrs. Hampton's horror, when, on looking out of the window over Mrs. Drew's shoulder, she saw her niece engaged in active personal encounter with a boy, while around stood a yelling crowd, cheering and screaming. Bess had rushed down the steps at the very moment the crowd of boys passed, and had dashed into their midst with so sudden a charge that she had surprised, and for a moment routed, the enemy. Seizing Ned by his shoulder, she had dragged him to the steps of Mrs. Drew's aristocratic mansion, and was about to bring him in, when the boys, recovering from their sudden surprise, raised a shout, and one more cowardly than the rest struck Bess.

Instantly there leaped into the little girl's eyes a fire kindled by fierce wrath, and without a thought of Aunt Maria, Mrs. Drew, or her own position, she returned the blow with a sound cuff on the ear, which sent the boy staggering back a pace; for, as Miss Bradley had never worn a back-board or corsets, but had been used to

the free use of her limbs, she was able on occasion to demonstrate the size of her "biceps" muscle.

The boys raised a stunning cheer, and formed a ring, shouting "A fight ! a fight !" and it was at this interesting moment that her aunt looked out of the window.

"Oh !" she groaned in despair. "Thomas's children will be my death !" and sank upon the chair quite overcome.

"What a bold, bad child she is !" exclaimed Mrs. Drew, indignantly. By this time the boy who had struck Bess advanced to seize Ned, and came towards him in a threatening way.

"Run up the steps and go in," cried Bess ; but poor Ned only stood and shivered ; Bess caught his hands and pulled him after her.

"Let him be, or I'll break your head !" said the boy, fiercely dragging Ned away and striking him.

Bess looked around for help, but the boys evidently considered this as a fight between Bess and her antagonist, and gave no more help than encouraging shouts of "Go in and win, petticoats !" "Give it to him in the eye, sis," and other stimulating cries.

But Bess had expended all her wrath and strength in one cuff, and the shame of her position rushed over her. What could she do ? Any-

thing but desert Ned to his foes, she thought. But what could she do? Oh! why didn't Aunt Maria hear her call, and come?

Aunt Maria was in a state of collapse on the cushioned window-seat, and Mrs. Drew was reviving her with a smelling-bottle.

Suddenly, Bess had an idea. In her hand she carried a parasol, an adjunct which, till this moment, she had always considered a wholly unnecessary, unmeaning, piece of apparel. Opening it in a twinkling, she thrust it into her adversary's face, and rapidly opened and shut it in quick succession.

This novel and unexpected mode of warfare caused the foe to retreat; and Bess followed up her advantage, and pursued, advancing a step as he retreated a step, holding the point of the parasol close to his nose, which, when it was suddenly opened, brought the ivory tips in very unpleasant proximity to his eyes.

Deafening cheers arose from the boys, and poor Bessie's cheeks were scarlet with shame. As good luck would have it, Tom came whistling around the corner at this moment, on his way home from the telegraph office.

"Oh, Tom!" screamed Bess. "Tom! do come!" and in a moment her strength seemed to leave her, and she suddenly dropped her weapon.

Tom stood still, looked, realized the state of affairs, and said with authority,—

“Bess, clear out of this! Go in!”

Bess ran up the steps and into the house, feeling that Ned had now a champion worthy of the cause; and Tom, pushing Ned before him, followed her unmolested, for the boys were now awake to the fact that they were causing a disturbance before the door of Judge Drew, who was a man able and willing to punish their offences, for a more inveterate boy-hater never existed. It would not do to risk a fight with Tom on those premises, and they took themselves off forthwith. And now, behold Tom and Bess and Ned in the parlour of Mrs. Drew!

“I have no words to express myself,” said Aunt Maria, rigidly, applying herself to her smelling-bottle for inspiration.

“You are very bad children,” added Mrs. Drew; “who is this boy? I will not have any of your low associates introduced here; take him away at once; his appearance is disgraceful.”

“Oh, Mrs. Drew!” cried Bess, “don’t send him out again now. Wait till those boys have gone far away. They’ll pump on him; see how they’ve tied his poor hands,” and Bess sobbed as she struggled with the knots in the string, while Tom, with a grunt of contempt for such a

piece of cowardice, took out his knife and cut the cord. Ned looked at Bess and began to laugh feebly, and point at her with his finger.

"He saved my life, indeed he did!" said Bess, as well as she could between her sobs; "he pulled me out of the water when the boat was sinking; his mother was good to me too; oh! I couldn't let him get hurt; but, indeed, Aunt Maria, I did not mean to do any harm; I'm very sorry! Tom! you know! Could I let him get hurt? I didn't want to fight."

"Very astonishing children," said Mrs. Drew. "Is this the way your brother's wife brings up her children, Maria? Does she allow them to roam alone in the woods, and get drowned in ponds and saved by idiots? I begin to understand some of your trials more fully, Maria!"

Aunt Maria held up her hands. "What could you expect?" she asked. "Thomas married to suit himself—I never selected his wife for him. Mary means well," added Mrs. Hampton, hastily, as a vision of a sweet, patient face rose before her; "she means well, but—well—it's want of faculty! She cannot bring up her children properly."

"She can! she does, too!" cried Tom, wrathfully. "How dare you say so, Aunt Maria? I mean, you're mistaken; mamma brings us up beautifully. It's not her fault if we raise the

old scratch—I mean, if we do wrong. She teaches us all right enough; it's our fault. You don't love mamma—you never did. You don't know half how good she is. She always takes your part, and you never do anything but abuse her!" And Tom's eyes were full of angry tears.

"Takes my part! And who is it that says anything against me, Thomas?"

"Everyone that knows you," cried Tom, with more truth than poetry in his remark.

Mrs. Hampton sobbed aloud.

"You see, my dear," said she, appealing to Mrs. Drew, "you see for yourself what I have to undergo. If they were not my own brother's children, I should go home at once and never darken those doors again. But I know my duty. I shall take them home with me now at once, not to trouble you further."

"Oh, Aunt Maria, indeed you need not come back on our account," cried Bess. "Tom and I would much rather walk than ride. You need not take us."

"Go and get into the carriage, both of you," said Aunt Maria; "and do not let me hear you speak till we get home."

"But Ned," said Bess; "we can't leave him; he will get among those boys again."

"His mother is coming here for work to-day,

and he may sit in the kitchen till she comes," said Mrs. Drew.

"Oh, thank you," cried Bess; "that will do nicely." She added, timidly: "Will you please tell her I did my best for him? She was so good to me. And I'm so sorry for poor Ned."

Mrs. Drew looked not unkindly at the little girl.

"She looks like her mother at times," she said.

"Hanged if I'll ride inside with Aunt Maria," said Tom to his sister, as they preceded Mrs. Hampton to her carriage.

"Oh, do, Tom! do please! let's be good, just for mamma's sake. Don't you hear what they all say of her? That's because we're so bad. And Archie and Bob ran off out of the parlour this afternoon, and I'm afraid they're up to some mischief; so do let us be good, Tom. Mamma will be so sorry if we're all bad all the time. Don't you think she'll be home to-morrow?"

"Guess so," answered Tom. "I said: 'Mamma, come home right off; don't wait; everything is horrid.' That will fetch her."

"Well, then, it won't be long. So do come, and sit quietly inside the carriage."

But Tom could not be persuaded to do anything but mount the box. He knew he would

be saucy to his aunt if she provoked him, and he thought discretion was the better part of valour.

Oh, what a ride home that was! Many times had the little Bradleys driven over that road, but never with such sinking hearts as now. It was bad enough for Tom, who was in full view, though out of the range, of Aunt Maria's guns; but poor Bess! she had to bear a long lecture, and it lasted nearly to the very door of the house. Mamma had never scolded so; no, not even when she had been very bad indeed, and she was conscious of rectitude of purpose now, though she had to admit that it was not a ladylike proceeding to go in for free fights in a village street. Still, she thought, mamma would understand why she had been unladylike; but Aunt Maria cared nothing at all about Ned, though she scolded terribly about the parasol, which had been broken in its fall.

Aunt Maria had entirely forgotten the state of the kitchen, and the leanness of the larder, in her agitation over her niece's conduct, and had consequently done nothing towards engaging servants or providing food. On her arrival at the farmhouse, she said she was very tired, quite exhausted, in fact, with her day, and would go and lie down till tea-time, nothing doubting that tea-time would succeed dinner-time as

harvest does seed-time. But, alas ! when Bess, much bruised in spirit, left her aunt, and went into the kitchen, she found everything in disorder, just as the servants had left it. As far as Bess could see, there was nothing for tea. She called Tom. Tom looked and whistled, and kicked one or two of the kettles in a meditative way with his foot, and finally played as on a tambourine, with a baking-dish for an instrument. But this was all that the masculine mind evolved from its inner consciousness. So Bess went for Mr. Bradley. He was quite weary with doing the honours of the place to Uncle Daniel, who, to be sure, had a kindly disposition, but whose conversation was "Hm, Hm," "Ah !" "Indeed !" and other remarks of the same somewhat limited nature. His friends attributed his silence to the fact of Aunt Maria's powerful mode of expressing herself ; two could not converse with equal force, and Uncle Daniel had retired from the conflict early in his married life. Silence is golden, it is true, but even gold palls upon the senses when it is exhibited in too great a quantity.

So Mr. Bradley was not unwilling to leave his brother-in-law and follow his little daughter, who led him into the kitchen.

"Now, papa," said she, "what's to be done ? You see how it is. And there's not a crust for

tea, nor anything at all. And Aunt Maria ! And think of poor mamma when she gets back ! Now, what are we to do ? ”

Mr. Bradley sat upon one corner of the kitchen table, and swung his leg lazily ; while Tom, who had found two jelly-cake tins, began to clash the loud cymbals and exultingly sing. Mr. Bradley drummed an accompaniment with his knuckles on the table, and said nothing, as he surveyed the scene of desolation.

“ Come, papa,” said Bess, encouragingly. “ Hurry up and think ; it’s nearly tea-time.”

“ What does your mother do in such cases ? ” he asked at length.

“ Oh, such things never happen when mamma is home,” cried Bess ; and even Tom stopped his music to give a snort of contempt at the idea that mamma could ever be found thus stranded.

“ How I do wish she was here ! ” at length sighed Mr. Bradley.

“ She’ll be home to-morrow,” said Tom, triumphantly. “ I’m going to drive Dick down to the depôt for her.”

“ Oh no, Tom,” said Mr. Bradley. “ Mamma won’t come back for three days yet.” This was dolefully said.

“ Yes, she will, for I’ve telegraphed her to come right home ! ” cried Tom, exultingly.

“ Tom,” said his father, “ give me your hand.

I respect you this day. You've done the best thing you ever did in your life."

"Papa," said Bess, "when mamma does get home, don't ever again tell her she works too hard and does nothing. Now you see what she has to do. She'll be home soon, and as it's only just this once, I'll run over to Mrs. Wilson's and borrow one of her girls and something to eat for tea and breakfast. Mrs. Wilson will laugh at me, but I don't care; mamma will be home to-morrow."

CHAPTER X.

MAMMA.

IN a handsome parlour, beautifully dressed, surrounded by a crowd of gay, laughing friends, sat Mrs. Bradley. Her pretty pale face was animated and smiling, and the excitement of receiving her friends had called a little colour to her cheeks. Her well-gloved hands lay so quietly in her lap, and looked so dainty, small, and pretty, that not one of the ladies around her had any idea that they had ever done harder work than coil the bright abundant hair on her shapely head, or clasp the bracelets that encircled her delicate white wrists.

She had clear, tender, bright eyes, and only a close observer would have noticed that expression in them which is natural to the mother of four healthy children, all in excellent spirits, living on a farm somewhat remote from town.

She had been visiting at her friend's house, as we already know ; and, notwithstanding a few uneasy misgivings about leaving home for so long a time, had thoroughly enjoyed the rest and change of which she stood in need.

For patient, pretty little mamma had a burden to bear that threatened at times to be too heavy for so gentle a spirit, or, rather, for so delicate a body, for her spirits never failed. Her easy, indolent, good-natured husband, a moderate income, and four children, were quite enough to manage, and once in a while mamma needed rest. So she had conscientiously given herself up to enjoyment, and the good effect of her visit was plainly seen in her bright face.

"You will surely remain in town a week longer," her friend had said, and Mrs. Bradley had seriously considered the possibility of so doing. In fact, she was discussing this very point when the waiter entered the room, bringing a large letter on a small salver, which he handed to Mrs. Bradley. The postman had just left it. With a little exclamation of pleasure she opened it. "Excuse me one moment," she said to those around her. "It is from home ;" and this was quite enough, in her opinion, to excuse her, even if Queen Victoria, Albert Edward, and all the royal family had been present.

"No bad news, I hope," said her friend, seeing a shade pass over Mrs. Bradley's face.

"Oh, none at all," she replied, cheerfully ;

"all are quite well, Mr. Bradley says ;" and she did not explain that the momentary shadow was caused by that sentence in her husband's letter which had shown so plainly that she was supposed by him to be fussy and over-particular. It was not altogether pleasant to know that they got along at home as well without her as with her, nor did she especially care to be told so by her husband. But she was thankful, yes, truly thankful, that all her dear ones were well. Between a smile and a tear she laid down the letter, and took up the enclosure to read more leisurely ; it was evidently from Tom, and mamma held it a little closer to her than necessary, for fear some prying eye might see the spelling. She loved the misspelt words written in Tom's own big, clumsy handwriting ; but others wouldn't know how good a boy her Tom was, how loving and tender to her, and—well—really—Tom ought to spell better !

"Oh ! oh !" suddenly cried mamma, turning very white.

"What is the matter, dear ?" anxiously asked her friend, watching her face.

Mrs. Bradley answered not ; she was hastily skimming the contents of her son's letter. "Bess almost drowned ! Archie's arm broken ! Tom in trouble ! Bob worst of all !" The paper fluttered down from her weak hand on to her silken lap, and for a moment the room seemed to reel around her. Only for a moment,

though. The hum of eager voices rose around, and all expressed the hope that Mrs. Bradley had no bad news from home.

"I must go home at once," said she. "My little Archie has broken his arm ;" and her lips trembled. "I ought not to have left the children," she added, as though to herself. There were many pleasant speeches of sympathy made in many polite voices ; but Mrs. Bradley, though she replied, heard them all as in a dream, while her thoughts flew to her home and she saw her children in a desolate condition ; and in and through the hum of voices she heard ringing in her ears a ridiculous rhyme Bess was in the habit of singing :—

"Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire, your children will burn."

She quietly slipped out of the room, knowing that her absence would not be noticed, and made her way to her room, followed by her friend.

"I must go to-night," said Mrs. Bradley, folding up her dresses and laying them in her trunk. "I am sorry, dear, to leave you suddenly, but indeed I must go."

Her friend urged her to stay until the next day, showing her how much more easily she would travel in the daytime, and trying to prove that matters were not so bad as Tom had made them appear, appealing to Mr. Bradley's letter as proof positive that nothing very

serious could have happened. She had almost persuaded her to stop packing and rejoin the company, and defer her departure till the next day, when a loud peal at the bell startled her; and in a minute John, the waiter, appeared again, this time without his salver and in haste.

"Telegram, mum," said he.

Mrs. Bradley tore it open; it said: "Mamma come home right off. Don't wait. Everything is horrid.—TOM."

Mrs. Bradley's friend urged no more, but did her best to hurry her poor, anxious guest off; and half an hour from the time we first saw her sitting at ease in the parlour, receiving friends Mrs. Bradley was steaming home as fast as the great iron horse could carry her.

We must return to the farm-house and to our mice at play

Owing to Bessie's exertions and her neighbour's help, a bountiful tea had been prepared and partaken of by Aunt Maria, who forgot to ask how this wonder had been accomplished. The children had all behaved uncommonly well and had gone to bed decorously. Uncle Daniel had buried himself in a book, and Mr. Bradley had exerted himself to entertain his grim sister; so that the evening really had passed off much better than could have been expected; and Aunt Maria said good-night, and took her candle and went to her room, and was succes-

fully got rid of, as her brother supposed, until morning.

Alas! how short-sighted are mortals!

Loud screams from upstairs roused Uncle Daniel and Mr. Bradley from their state of rest; and, rushing upstairs, they saw Mrs. Hampton in her night-dress, holding her candle aloft over her bed; she had turned down the bed-clothes, evidently to get in, and was arrested in the act. There, directly in the centre of the bed, lay three enormous black-beetles!

“How could they get there?” asked Mr. Bradley, hastily removing them, while Aunt Maria shivered from head to foot, and, with chattering teeth, muttered, “Such disgraceful housekeeping I never saw!” A soft patter of bare feet outside the door suggested to Mr. Bradley that Bob and Archie knew how they got there, and he went after those young men instantly. But they lay, apparently, in sweet placid slumbers, and did not even hear when their father called them aloud three times. This was the more remarkable, as Aunt Maria’s screams had awakened Bess and Tom, who were peeping out from their bedrooms, begging to be told what the matter was; and one would naturally suppose the little boys would have awakened also. But they were very tired, and slept profoundly till all was still again, and the click of the latch told that their father had gone to his room.

Then they awoke suddenly, hopped around the room, had a pillow fight, and giggled, and snuggled back again into bed as they thought they heard a step approaching.

"Didn't she screech?" said Bob.

"Hollered like an old Guinea hen!" said Archie.

"I'm real glad we did it, ain't you?"

"Yes, indeed! Serve her right, ugly old thing!"

"Did you tie the pigs very tight?"

"No, I couldn't; but Peter will."

"Did he say he'd bring them under the window?"

"Yes; at twelve o'clock."

"It must be most that now."

"Don't know; but it's so quiet, I guess she's asleep."

"Hush! what's that?"

"Oh, it's Peter! And the pigs! Here they come!"

And two excited faces looked over the head-board into the moonlit garden.

"Get down, Bob," said Archie, in a loud, hoarse whisper. "Get down, and lie still; the minute they begin, father will come after us again. Lie down, I tell you!" and Archie pulled Bob's bare leg, so that he came down suddenly.

"Look out for my arm!" said he, wrathfully.

Bob giggled and chuckled, and shook the bed with laughter.

"If you don't keep still, you won't be able to hear when papa comes," said Archie, angrily. "Hark! there they are!"

A succession of the most fearful grunts and squeaks told that there they were indeed; and if ever you have heard the noise made by two pigs tied tightly together by the tails, then you know what kind of a serenade Aunt Maria's youngest nephews had prepared for her. Oh, my little readers, remember that the young Bradleys are not held up to you as examples, but as dreadful warnings!

Squeak! Squeak! Grunt! Weeeeeee! Houk! Houkh! Houkh! Weee! Weee! went the pigs. The two boys heaved up the bed-clothes with their suppressed laughter.

"It'll wake her soon," said Archie.

"I should think so; they're right under her window."

"Oh! won't she be mad!"

"Hush! I hear her. She's up!"

Houkh! Houkh! Wheehoukh! Squeeeeeeeee!

"That's Blacky; he always squeals loudest," said Bob.

The opening of a window was now heard, and through the partition wall Archie heard his aunt's ruffled tones, "Throw something at them, Daniel; make them go away!"

"I think they are tied there," answered Uncle Daniel, very slowly.

"Then it's Tom's doings!" exclaimed Aunt Maria, rising wrathfully. "I shall go at once to Thomas, and insist on his punishing him. Such actions! I never saw! In all my born days!" And, with many groans and exclamations, Aunt Maria groped her way to the door. The little boys in bed could hear her hands on the other side of the wall.

This was what they had not calculated on. She was going to get Tom punished. And he knew nothing about it. The thought sobered them. "Now there'll be a precious row!" said Archie.

"Oh! what shall we do?" asked Bob, as his aunt's door opened, and they heard her enter their father's room. "Tom wouldn't have done it; he calls such things mean."

"Well, Tom won't tell of us," said Archie.

"But papa will punish him." And Bob kicked his feet out uneasily. "Just listen, Archie, Aunt Maria and father are going to Tom's room."

Sure enough, they were. Mr. Bradley, roused out of his first sound sleep, was just enough awake to be very cross and confused; he understood that something was to be done, or had been done, but where or what, he didn't know; so he stumbled along behind his sister, half dressed and very irritable. By the time they reached Tom's door, however, he was wide awake; and, entering, he jerked the pillow from

under his son's head as a means of more effectually rousing the culprit. Tom's head fell back heavily, and he gave a loud snore.

"Wake up, sir," cried his father, shaking him by the arm.

"Thank you," murmured poor Tom, turning over, still sound asleep.

"Give him a good box on the ear," said Aunt Maria.

"Maria, I never struck a child in my life!" said goaded Mr. Bradley.

"Then it's high time you did!" replied Aunt Maria. "Such government! I never saw! Bad, disrespectful children! Everything going to rack and ruin! Pigs tied under my window at midnight; beetles in my bed! That boy will live to be hung; and you, Thomas, will be answerable for it. Oh, this is what I should have expected! When I slaved and toiled for you! To be treated so by your children!"

"Get up, sir!" roared Mr. Bradley, out of all patience.

"Pigs tied under my window! Beetles in my bed!" moaned Aunt Maria.

"What's the row?" asked Tom, opening his eyes at last. "Who's hurt? What's wrong?"
Houkhh! Houkhhh! Squeeeeeeeeeee!!!

"Pigs, to insult me, tied under my window. You did it!" and Aunt Maria turned fiercely on Tom.

"I didn't!" cried Tom, angrily.

"You did, sir!"

"I tell you, I didn't."

"And I tell you, you did!" almost screamed Mrs. Hampton.

"Tom, how dare you!" cried Mr. Bradley
"How dare you tell a lie! Who tied pigs under your aunt's window, if you didn't?"

Tom instantly saw the whole thing. Now he knew what Bob and Archie had been plotting. How mean of them. He'd let them know what he thought of this by-and-by. But for the present he held his tongue.

"Answer me," said his father. "Who did it?"

Tom remained silent.

"Thomas, if you don't whip that boy now, I'll never forgive you," cried the excited aunt.

"If you don't confess, I'll whip you," said Mr. Bradley.

Now Tom had never been whipped in his life. The hot blood mounted to his temples; he clenched his fists.

"Tom, don't! it's father!" screamed Bess, throwing herself on her brother's arm. She had stolen in, just in time to hear the climax.

The sound of his sister's voice brought him to his senses. "Father, I didn't mean to," he faltered; and then, throwing himself on the bed, he sobbed aloud.

Another instant, and he might have struck his father! Oh, his hot temper! would he ever

learn to curb it? He thought of his mother's entreaties to him to pray against giving way to it. He had forgotten to pray that night, and now how near he had come to striking his father! He was completely overcome, and sobbed like a girl. Mr. Bradley's face was white. He realised in this one dreadful moment his responsibility as a father. Never till now had he felt it.

Rat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat, went the iron knocker on the front door. "Oh, do let me in! What is the matter? Is Archie dead?" cried a weak, horror-struck voice outside.

"It's mamma!" cried Tom, starting up, and darting down stairs, and in another moment the big boy held his own frightened little mamma in his strong arms, and kissed her frantically.

"It's mamma!" cried Bess, tearing down stairs in her bare feet and night-gown, as hard as she could go.

"It's mamma!" said Archie, in a frightened whisper.

"Then come on, there's nothing to be afraid of," answered little Bob, rolling out of bed head first in his eagerness to get to her.

"Oh, mamma!" cried Mr. Bradley, in a choked voice, taking her out of Tom's arms into his own; and for one moment there was a deep hush in the moon-lit hall.

"Archie!" gasped mamma.

"He's all right," sang out Tom, cheerily. "Here he comes." And, sure enough, two little

white figures came stealthily past Aunt Maria, and darted into the hall with a sudden bound. All four children were there, alive and well.

Mrs. Bradley drew a long breath, "Oh, I thought something fearful had happened! Why were you all up? Why didn't you hear me when I drove up and called? What has happened?"

"It's only Aunt Maria," exclaimed Tom, in a disgusted voice. "It's Aunt Maria. She's been setting us all by the ears. And we've all been as bad as ever we could be; but now you're home, it will be all right. Hooray!"

And Tom climbed up the smooth wooden column that supported the upper stairs, and slid down the banisters with a wild shout of triumph, caught Bess round the waist, and whirled her madly around the hall, and then throwing his arms about his mother's neck, he kissed her till she thought her head would come off.

"We've all been bad," said he, "I squirted Kate's ear, and 'most killed her."

"And I ran away," faltered Bess.

"And I dropped the silver teapot down the well," said Bob, exultingly.

"And I rode the trick mule all around the ring once, and broke my arm a little; but it's mending itself like sixty, now," shouted Archie.

"And I wouldn't let Aunt Maria split my liver before the fire, like a patty forgras," added Tom, "and she got mad at me."

"And I forgot to brush my teeth, and I fought a boy in the village street, in front of Mrs. Drew's," said Bess.

"And I put three big black-beetles in Aunt Maria's bed, and scared her," cried Bob, cheerily.

"And I tied Spot and Blacky under her window to squeal and wake her up," said Archie.

"Good gracious! children!" cried mamma, breathlessly.

"And I let Maria hector me into dismissing cook, and she and Maggie have both gone away," added Mr. Bradley; "but I know they'll both be back as soon as they hear you are home again. We will see them in the morning, thank goodness! Daniel says he and Maria will leave before breakfast. You'll have to make peace there, you know how. Everything will be all right now you've got home, dear darling! precious little mamma! with brains enough for us all! We can't get along without you at all; and next time you go, we will all go too, for we are not to be trusted alone. Go to bed, children, you'll all take cold," continued Mr. Bradley, with a sudden assumption of authority, and a virtuous intention of hereafter doing his duty as a father more fully than hitherto. "Go to bed, every one of you. Mamma's got home now, and we've all got to behave. It's only when the cat's away the mice can play."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAMILY COUNCIL.

"PERHAPS you are right, Maria," said mamma, very sadly. "Certainly the children have behaved very badly, and show a great want of discipline. And yet I cannot believe in harsh measures."

This was in answer to a long tirade from Mrs. Hampton, in which she had set forth the delinquencies of the little Bradleys in a strong and unflattering light ; and had suggested that their faults were mainly owing to their education ; and for this their parents, but more especially their mother, was responsible.

"They are brought up like wild cats," said Aunt Maria, whose knowledge of natural history was limited. "They run about the farm, and never see anybody ; they associate with the servants, and with the animals ; they climb fences, and ride horses, and they don't learn their lessons, nor brush their teeth—just like wild cats, precisely."

Mrs. Bradley forbore to smile. She was thinking sadly of the disadvantages of her life. She had done her best by precept and example to teach her children ; yet Aunt Maria was right, they rarely came in contact with educated people. Mr. Bradley was obliged to live on his farm, and it was too far from the city to enable

him to send the children to school every day. The neighbouring village offered little or nothing in the way of educational advantages, and the idea of boarding-school was abhorrent to both Mr. and Mrs. Bradley. While the children were little, nothing could be pleasanter than the fresh, free life of the farm. They had increased in strength and stature, but, alas ! not in the ways of grace.

Mamma had to admit, the day after her return, when Aunt Maria paused for a reply, that she was right when she declared that the little Bradleys were sinners, that their ways were not the ways of pleasantness, nor were all their paths those of peace. They did that which they should not do, and they left undone that which they should have done, and there was no spiritual health in them.

The rosy faces of the culprits were much subdued in expression this morning, as they surrounded their mother. Aunt Maria had convened a solemn assemblage in the parlour. The sins and wickednesses of the miserable little offenders had been duly set forth ; and now, with their hands in those of mamma, and their eyes fastened on her pretty, pale, sad face, they felt that they would rather have been beaten black and blue than see the troubled, anxious look in her dear eyes, and know that they had caused it. This punishment was great, too great for Tom, who slid down by her side, and hid his rough

head in her lap. He could not bear to think that all the good mamma had derived from her absence was more than counterbalanced by this present trouble. Why hadn't they behaved themselves? he asked himself again and again. They were old enough to know better, and they had shown that they were not to be trusted. Remorse set in violently, and Tom would gladly have done penance to any extent, save and except that of kissing Aunt Maria.

"Children, what shall I do with you?" asked mamma, plaintively, looking at her little wretches with love and sorrow.

"You might throw stones at us, mamma," suggested Bob, very seriously; but the others kept quiet.

Tom and Bess had a foreboding of what was to come. Mr. Bradley was inclined to treat the whole thing as of no consequence. "Pshaw!" he said, "what was the use? They were babies, they knew no better; they would behave properly after this." But Uncle Daniel, that man of few words, delivered himself of the following speech:—

"The children are naturally good, but they need what you cannot give them here. Send them away, and let them go where they will meet other children who have been well brought up."

This from Uncle Daniel was scarcely less surprising than an earthquake.

Nobody spoke for a minute. Mamma's face grew a shade paler ; Mr. Bradley put his hands in his pockets and whistled under his breath ; Aunt Maria took off her spectacles and looked at her husband with awe and astonishment, and Tom and Bess knew that they were doomed.

Yes, all felt that the oracle had spoken. Further argument was superfluous. The die was cast. There was silence in the room for a full minute ; then Mrs. Bradley said : " Aunt Maria, you have only brought to a point a subject that has long troubled my conscience. You have meant to be kind to my little ones, and I thank you. I do not agree with you about punishment, for I know that my children are not wicked, although careless and thoughtless. But I see that you and Uncle Daniel are right in saying that they need more culture than we can give them here, and they must have it. They need the restraint of society."

" They do, indeed," interpolated Aunt Maria.

" I'll tell you what it is, Mary," said Mr. Bradley ; " we will accept the invitations that your sister Lucy and Mrs. Philips have sent to our children. You are right, and Aunt Maria is right. Lucy can have Bessie ; she will be glad enough of a companion for her little Grace ; and as for Tom——"

" Oh, don't say boarding-school !" cried Tom.

" No, you shall not go to boarding-school. We will tell you by-and-by, Tom, what our

plan is for you ; and, as for Archie and Bob, they shall stay at home, and learn to behave themselves."

At this prospect, Bob set up a howl ; but, catching sight of Aunt Maria, he stopped suddenly and retreated behind his mother's chair.

So it was settled ; and the Fates, in the person of Aunt Maria, were appeased. That good lady simmered down gently, after a while, under mamma's influence, and finished her visit much more prosperously than she began it. The recreant servants returned meekly to their injured mistress, to whom they were really attached, and made many ample apologies for their desertion.

" But, indade, ma'am ! With respect to you, th' ould lady is quite enough to dhrive a poor girl mad ; and, afther Misther Tom had me senses bewildered wid his tratement of me ear, I didn't know what I was about at all at all," said Kate ; while Margaret put her apron to her eyes, and said, " If it was the last word she ever was to spake, she'd say that Mrs. Bradley was the only lady she ever met fit to live wid ; and she'd serve her on her bended knees from mornin' till night, if required so to do."

As Margaret was more useful when she assumed the perpendicular, Mrs. Bradley made no such requirements ; but intimated that to hold herself erect before her fellow-man would be more conducive to the harmony of the family,

and recommended that position, morally as well as physically, to her notice.

Tom was not kept long in suspense as to his fate. It appeared on mamma's showing that her visit to New York had been made partly with regard to this very subject. The friend with whom she stayed in town was anxious that Tom should live with her and go to school. She had no children, and was much attached to Mrs. Bradley, and truly anxious to relieve her of care.

I fear very much that the truth which dawned so slowly on the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley had been long appreciated by their friends, and it had been plainly seen that our four little mice needed training.

And they had run directly into the trap! If they had been very steady during their mother's absence, it is more than probable that another year would have passed, and then the question of leaving home would have rested. But now, even mamma herself saw it best to send them away, and Tom and Bess meekly acquiesced.

They hardly knew if they were pleased or not. It would be hard to leave home before the nuts dropped, very hard to give up skating on the pond, hardest of all to leave their parents; still there were compensations. The city was a new and unexplored region, where numerous adventures were to be had. Pocket-money would be provided, and papa himself would take

them. They would live very near each other, and meet every day, and there was something exciting in the prospect of managing for themselves. Bess was to have music lessons, and Tom was to learn Latin; both were to go to dancing-school! This last idea was so exhilarating to Tom, that he undertook to show Kate how to dance; and feats of agility of a most extraordinary nature were performed in the kitchen, in the course of which Tom was as often on his head as on his heels, and his audience loudly applauded when he walked across the floor on his hands, his feet elevated high in air. Kate was sure "no masther could tache him more nor that, sure," and seemed to think further education in the terpsichorean art entirely unnecessary.

And now began troublous times for Bessie, for she had to be fitted with new dresses, and this was an operation Bessie hated. Nothing but the fear of displeasing mamma kept her still under the infliction; and Miss Watson, the dress-maker, complained loudly that she might as well try to fit an eel as Bessie Bradley. "Put in pockets each side, and don't make it *crowdy*," was Bessie's one direction; and beyond the fact that she had two pockets, and could twist herself about inside of a loose waist, she cared nothing for the style of her garments. But Mrs. Bradley—like Charity—suffered long and was kind, and her little daughter never knew

how she tried her mother's heart and soul at this period of her career.

At last the dresses were all made; the clothes for Tom arrived; the trunks were packed; the friends in town awaited the arrival of the children; and they had but one more evening at home.

Again they sat around the wood fire, but this time faces and hands were shining and bright.

"You'll write to us, mamma," said Tom, who, as usual, was sprawling on the floor nearest his mother, with his head in her lap.

"Yes, darling, very often; and I shall expect to hear often from you—always once a week, Tom, remember."

"And you won't mind the spelling?" he asked, doubtfully.

"No; for, although I do hope you will learn to spell properly some day, I want your letters to me to be free and unreserved. Tell me everything, and have no fear: I will not show your letters."

"And, mamma, you'll come to see us,—and papa, too?" said Bess.

"Oh yes!" said papa. "We'll be glad of an excuse. You shall see us in town, Miss Bradley. Some day, when you are walking in Fifth Avenue, you'll say, 'Who on earth is this country-looking fellow coming along?' and you will be quite mortified to see your own old father."

"Oh, *papa!*" cried Bess, indignantly; "I'd never be mortified, not if you rode old Dick, and wore your blue coat, that oldest blue coat that came under my despisements long ago. I'd be proud of you if you drove a charcoal cart! I'd love you best of all in the world if you were a dustman!" and Bessie hugged her handsome papa, and wondered why he did not speak. But papa was thinking that it would be lonely in one corner of the fireplace to-morrow evening, and many evenings after that, and he patted his little girl's head, but said nothing.

"You two are going away to be grand," said Archie slowly. "I bet you'll both come home stuck-up and proud. You will be too big to play one old cat any more with me. But you'll have to wear *gloves!* How do you like *that?*"

There was a sarcasm that spoke of envy in Archie's tones. To tell the truth, Archie longed to go as much as Tom wanted to stay at home.

"Yes, and maybe somebody will marry you," said little Bob, solemnly; which suggestion was received with shouts of derision from Bessie and Archie; and Tom, sitting bolt upright, proclaimed that he'd "like to see anyone dare to do it!"

"Come," said papa, "it's time to go to bed. Bring the Bible, Bess, and we'll have prayers;" and then, with more than ordinary quietness, the four children listened to the account of

Jacob, when he left his father's house and started out alone in the world. "And Jacob vowed a vow," read Mr. Bradley: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

And when the Bible was laid aside, and papa knelt, with his arm loosely thrown around mamma, and prayed that God would bless his little ones and bring them again to their home in peace, I do not blame him because his voice trembled a little, nor do I think less of him because a tear fell on Bessie's head when he kissed her good-night.

CHAPTER XII.

A LETTER FROM TOM.

DEAR MAMMA,—You know it's just one month since I came hear. And I'm getting along pretty wel. I told you all about our jurny. Did papa give you the earrings out of the prize package? Mrs. Philips sais I must call her Aunty. She is verry good to me but is orful particular about my nails. Now what's the use of that? The boys at school look like molly coddles, they are so clene and fixy. One of the fellers wears a tail coat. And the barber said my hair was mommy cut. He has sniped my hair too close, and I look orful. My eares stik out so each side. The boy with the

tail coat called me donkey, and I likked him. I broke out his front tooth, and it was a second tooth. Now he wil have to get a store tooth. Ime real sorry. I told him so. I sade I would pay for a store tooth ; how much do they corst, do you suppose. Any way, his tooth must hav been pretty brittle, but who would stand being called a donkey. I wont. The boys call me "country." I don't minde that, but I wont stand being called donky. You woodn't ether. Nor Mrs. Philips. She dont know about it. The feller sade no matter and I gues he don't care much. my latin is orful ! horrid !! I wish the man who rote it had all *his* teeth knocked ten miles down his throte. Mr. Johnson, our teecher, sais Ime very stupid. I think I am, but whose to blame, I didn't make myself and wasn't made smart, so its unjust to cawl me stupid. Besides Ive lerned to spell since I came, and that's enuff. Mr. Johnson sais Latin is a ded langwage. I wish it was, and berried too. deer mamma, did your ever study it. Pleas tell me, and how did you do it. Do you think Ime stupid. I like School some, but not much. I like reses ; we play ball, but the fellers don't know much, there is no room in the citty for anything, its all crowded. Bess and I are going to dansing school to-morrow, and Mrs. Philips sais Ime to wear kid gluv's. We wil see if I do ! Mrs. Phillips took me to the Opra last night. It was verry quere. A lot of gawks got up and

squalled. There was a man wanted to marry a woman and coodn't, and got shut up in a tower, and plaid on a bango, and she heard him outside, and showed loud enuf to be herd ten miles of, but he didn't here her, bekaus he kept on with his bango at such a rate; and there was a fat man who roared like sixty, and kept hitting himself great tunks in his stummick, and when I said "Whats the rumpus now, Aunty," to Mrs. Philips she laffed like every thing, and sade the fat man was in luv with the same woman, and was saying so in a song. A quere way, wasn't it mamma? I don't like the Opra much. Theres to much singing. Mr. Philips sais so too. Mrs. Philips made me lern a lot of stuff about it. She sais the woman sings supperarno, and the man tenner, the fat man that rored so, was base, and another feller was barry tone, she made me lern all the names, but I woodn't know one from another next time Ime shure, for they kept changing thare dresses; there were two women, but I've forgotten what they called the other one. Do you like the Opra, deer mamma, I want to like what you do, bekaus I luv you, and I want to be like you, so I hope you don't like the Opra much. I go to Church. Its pretty good, not verry. Its not like ours. Here the minister wears a white gown, and so do lots of boys and thay all sing, and its verry quere. I don't see anny good at all in so much singing. Wy can't fokes speke out, and stop singing.

I've got a new hat. Lots of fellers that go to school, go to our church. Mr. Johnson sais his is a church school, what does that mene, pleas tel me, and tel Mr. Johnson I can't sing, bekaus lots of our fellers have to sing in church and ware white gowns, and I won't. We have prayers every day in school, and collex. The collex is orful hard. Mr. Johnson sais the Bishop is coming soon, next Sunday, and lots of fellers are going to be confirmed. He sais ask you about it. What is it? I forgot it before. Its next Sunday—tomorrer—so if you want me to be confirmed—telegraf.

Good bye, deer mamma ; I hate to rite, but I want to rite to you, bekaus Ime lonely for you. don't show my leters to annybody.

Your luving son,

TOM.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Tom received no telegram, although he went to the office immediately after breakfast on Sunday morning, and remained there until the church-bells stopped ringing. He was really anxious to do what was right, for this big and—I grieve to say—somewhat dull boy was very fond of his mother, and would have done anything to please her. All things were new to him in the city ; one occurrence was as strange as another ; and, although he bore himself like a philosopher, and gave no sign he really suffered from a sense of his ignorance.

Tom had been repeatedly told not to ask too many questions, and yet he found it absolutely necessary to do so. On all possible occasions, however, when a question could be spared, he forbore to add to his stock of knowledge, and trusted to time and his own unassisted reason to find out what was meant. He had not the dimmest comprehension of the Episcopal Church service; and, boy-like, troubled himself but little with his Prayer Book. His religion was, to go to church twice on Sunday, and sit still while there; and nothing but love for his mother could have induced him to accomplish this.

As to *confirmation*, he supposed it was a part of the rest; it was something to be done; he hoped it was not as hard as Latin grammar; but, hard or easy, he would "go for it," as he said, if it was his mother's wish. Perhaps Tom's religion was not as stupid as may appear at first. There have been some in the world who have lived and died, and done the will of God because they loved it, and their lives were very lovely. Tom tried to do this, and looked to his mother as interpreter of that will.

There were days when poor Tom was so homesick that he would gladly have cried like a baby. On such occasions he looked very stolid, said very little, appeared somewhat sulky, and forbore to go near Bessie, knowing that the first word about home would upset his equanimity. He generally wrote to his mother when

he felt so, and reduced all the fingers of his right hand to the same state of blackness in the process. Mrs. Philips seriously considered the point of buying lemons by the box, in order to remove the stains from the hands of her young guest ! and finally compromised on vinegar as more economical ; but after a while, when she understood the boy better, she let him alone, and bore the inky fingers without a murmur, knowing it to be an indication of sorrow—an outward and visible sign of mourning. Once she undertook to sympathise with him, and to her surprise Tom very quietly said : “ I’ll tell you a story that papa told me. Once there was an Indian ; he came to the city. It was Washington city. He was a chief. He walked about the streets till he got lost, and he felt very badly. He was frightened at so many houses ; and as he walked, he said to himself, ‘ Wigwam gone, Indian lost ; wigwam gone, Indian lost ! ’ After a while he stopped, and looking up suddenly, he said, proudly, ‘ No ! *wigwam* lost ! *Indian here !* ’ That’s the way I feel, aunty ; please don’t bother me.”

After this, Mrs. Philips did not try to console Tom on his inky days ; she only showed him a tender consideration, which the boy appreciated and never forgot ; and she in turn learned the fact that an uninteresting dull school-boy has a dignity of character all his own, however singularly it may be expressed.

Not that Tom gave himself up to dignified pursuits—far from it! Little by little, as he became accustomed to his new surroundings, his homesick days became less frequent; and after a six weeks' residence in the city, there was little to tell of anything but health and strength and good spirits on the part of Thomas Bradley, Jun. He was a great favourite with the boys at school, by whom he was at first ridiculed and afterwards respected; for his personal prowess was great, and it was soon considered best to let him alone.

He was well instructed in all boyish games, and able to teach many new and delightful ones. He knew a great deal about rabbits and poultry, and guinea pigs and pigeons; and almost every boy in school had some pet of this description which was in constant trouble. Tom became a kind of veterinary surgeon to the school. Long consultations were held at recess about the various ailments of the different animals and birds, and Tom's word was accepted as law on all such subjects. He was in great demand after school, and was invariably taken home by his different friends to prescribe for and treat his patients. He clipped the wings of favourite hens, and trained young pigeons to come at the sound of a whistle; educated little terriers on the rat question, and pronounced on their disorders; administered sulphur pills and lime, nitric acid and pepper, as cleverly as any

poultry fancier, and with great success ; relieved all twisted toes or inverted nails ; extracted thorns, and bound up wounds—in fact, Tom acted as surgeon-in-chief to all the boys of Mr. Johnson's school, and their dumb pets.

Moreover, he was the best skater in the school, and the best ball player ; for which reasons he was exalted in the eyes of the very boys who had at first laughed at his long ears, and despised him as a "country punkin." As he gradually attained his great eminence in school society he lost his sense of loneliness, and it was less dreadful to him to think of his Latin grammar ; not because he understood it any better, nor achieved success in its study, but because his mind was pleasantly diverted from the subject. Fortunately for Tom, there was one boy in the school to whom study was impossible ; and consequently Tom was never foot of his class, though he occupied the distinguished position of "next to foot." Mrs. Bradley, looking over the reports which were sent to her by Mr. Johnson, devoutly hoped that the parents of the other boy might not become discouraged and remove him. "It would mortify Tom to be foot," said mamma ; but Mr. Bradley elevated his right eyebrow curiously.

"Tom is very clever, or will be," said mamma, hastily, interpreting her husband's expression of face.

"Possibly," was the answer.

"Oh, indeed," said mamma, with a little flush on her cheeks. "*I* know what he is; he may appear dull to others, but *I* know what is in him."

"I trust, then, my dear, that it will soon come out of him," said unbelieving Mr. Bradley.

"If Tom is not a genius, I am mistaken," said Mrs. Bradley, with strict impartiality of judgment. "If he does not make a great man, I shall be terribly disappointed."

"Why should we expect it?" asked Tom's father. "If only one man in ten thousand is a genius, why should our boy be that one? Is it reasonable to expect more of him than of the nine hundred and ninety-nine?"

But mamma sewed energetically, nodding her head a little, as though saying to herself, "We shall see; time will show!"

Oh, little boys of this generation, listen to me while I tell you something. As long as your mammas are alive, there will be one woman on earth who believes you can do everything, and can be anything—who will have faith in you, who will believe all things that are good of you, and nothing that is evil. Whether you appreciate this or not, the fact will remain the same. The eyes into which you looked when you were babies will have to be closed in their last long sleep before the light of perfect love goes out on earth for you, before one woman's perfect

trust in you is over. How do I know this? That is a secret which I dare not tell, for fear somebody might be unjust to me and say I was partial.

If Mrs. Bradley could have seen her son one Saturday morning, after he had been in the city about two months, she would have exulted greatly in his abilities; for Tom developed great mechanical genius unexpectedly, and constructed a telegraph! You have all heard of Morse, have you not? His name is widely known in connection with the subject of the telegraph, and it only shows the injustice of the world, that that of Thomas Bradley has hitherto been lost to fame—possibly on account of the little disaster I am about to relate.

Tom had a friend whose name was Harry Eastman. They sat next to each other in school, and soon found that their tastes were congenial, and an intimacy sprang up between them. Harry lived near Mrs. Philips, in the next street, and the rear of his house was diagonally opposite to the rear of hers. The boys found that they could converse with each other if they shouted very loudly across the space between the houses, each standing in his own bedroom window. This was very delightful, and many and loud and long were these conversations.

Unfortunately, however, a very sick lady lived next door to Harry; and after bearing the

noise as long as was possible, she sent her nurse with a polite message to Mrs. Eastman, begging her to suppress this pursuit of friendship under difficulties, suggesting that it was as dangerous to the lungs of the two boys as it was to her peace of mind. The nurse delivered her message with some asperity, and intimated her belief that croup, diphtheria, and consumption were, and would be, the just reward of the evil deeds of the two boys, and expressed her wonder at the neglect of the parents who could permit such proceedings in mid-winter. "Why," she argued, "should they not meet in their own houses if they wanted to talk? Why must they scream at each other from back windows, waking up everybody, at all hours of the day and night, with their yellings and their slammings and their poundings?" There was but one answer to this question, and Mrs. Eastman made it. "Very true," she said; and she wrote a note of apology to her neighbour, and told Harry he was to scream no more. Now Harry was present when the complaint was made; and, although he was one of the children supposed to be well brought up—one of the very means of reform suggested by Uncle Daniel—I grieve to say that—to use a slang term—he *went back* on his educational privileges, and made a face at the nurse while she was yet in the act of talking to his mother. And from that moment, war was declared. After this, she never appeared

on the front steps on her way for her noon airing, without receiving compliments from Master Eastman, whose fate brought him home at that hour every day, in order to partake of a bountiful luncheon. His constitution was delicate, and could not stand the school diet, nor endure a long fast; and special permission was given to this young invalid to race home at noon, conceal several pounds of cake and jam, and return to the Temple of Knowledge. The nurse, on her part, found it necessary to take the air every day, and was obliged to do so while her lady was asleep; so constant opportunity was afforded for the interchange of civilities. "So there you are!" the nurse would say. "Now see you go in quietly. Don't slam your front door and wake my lady, you noisy boy!"

"Who are you?" would be the polite retort. "Mind your own business!"

"You impertinent little fellow! I'll go right in and tell your mother!"

"Go!—go quick, before your shoes wear out! Go!—why don't you go?—Hired girl! Slave! Dish washer! Bed maker! Physic dropper!"

Of course, this could not be allowed; and Mrs. Eastman became subject to frequent calls from the woman, who made grievous complaints about Harry. At last, when his language became more than usually injurious, and he had achieved the success of driving her frantic by calling her "Old Corn-and-Bunion Curer" in

presence of a passing policeman, she declared she could stand it no longer, and laid her grievances before Mrs. Eastman so forcibly that she was obliged to promise to punish Harry and put a stop to the trouble.

Accordingly, Master Eastman was told that he was to stay in his bedroom all of one Saturday. He was not to leave his room on any pretence, and no amusement was provided save and except the learning of his Sunday School lesson. This was a dreary prospect; but Harry improved the occasion as far as possible. He took an extra nap in the morning, ate his breakfast in bed, had a pillow fight with the housemaid, who was his particular friend, and neglected his wardrobe. But all this only brought him to ten o'clock; and it was *such* a day for skating. That mean old nurse—it was all her doing! His mother sent word to him to study his lesson, and he sulkily sat down to it. "Love thy neighbour—I'll fix her yet!—as thyself—she'll see what she'll get! Do unto others—I'll stretch a string for her, and trip her up—as you would that they should do unto you. Bless those that curse you—mean old thing, telling tales of me!—and pray for them—hope she'll be kept awake all night—that despitefully use you—Hurrah! there's Tom!" The lesson suddenly came to an end, as Tom appeared at his window.

It so happened that a long letter from home

had awakened the boy's yearning to see his parents and little brothers ; and Tom, after reading it, had gone to his window as a private place in which to wink back his tears unseen. His eye was soon attracted by Harry, who flung open his window, and waved a red flannel shirt therefrom, which was hung to an umbrella. Harry was rheumatic, and obliged to wear red flannel. This treatment was particularly good for him when he wore it out of the window, on a December day, as a flag.

His signal of distress was soon seen, and although forbidden to shout to Tom, the captive soon found means to escape from his loneliness. He first cut large letters in paper, and held them up for Tom to read ; and this, assisted by violent pantomime, soon revealed the fact to his friend that he was incarcerated unjustly at the instigation of his enemy. To make the matter surer, however, Tom ran round to Harry's house, and was told that he could not be seen. Harry, who listened at his door, and heard this message delivered, returned to his window, and awaited rescue. Tom soon reappeared, and signalled Harry to open his window. Harry did so, and, to his unspeakable delight, saw that Tom was about to establish communication. First he held up his bow and arrow, then he nodded a great deal, then he held up a ball of twine, and Harry nodded in reply till he was quite dizzy.

Then Tom took aim, and shot an arrow in the direction of his friend's house.

Unlike that of the famous Tell, it did not reach its mark, but fell short, and into the yard. Tom pulled it up by the twine string he had attached to it. It became entangled in the process, and lodged itself in the shutters of Mrs. Philips' room. Tom signalled, "Never mind, let it hang!" and produced another.

This time his aim was better; the arrow went farther, and struck against the window of the sick lady's room, falling into her yard. Tom signalled that all hope was over, cut his twine hastily, and retired behind his closet-door to watch the effect, momentarily expecting the bell to ring, and the nurse to appear below, armed with the terrors of the law. It so happened, however, that the enemy was not on the alert, and had not noticed that Tom was indulging in the reckless pursuits of one of Mr. Longfellow's poetical characters—who shot arrows into the air, that fell to earth he knew not where.

So, after five minutes' retirement, Tom concluded that all was safe, and returned to his occupation. His third and last arrow was held up for Harry's inspection, who appreciated his friend's devotion to the cause, and hung breathlessly from his window, inviting, as it were—even alluring—the arrow to lodge in his eye.

Fortunately Tom aimed for Harry's head this time. If he had aimed at the window or the

house, it would surely have struck Harry and put an end to all the nurse's troubles then and there ; but, as he took very careful aim directly at his friend's eye, he succeeded in sending the arrow about a foot from that lustrous orb, directly through the window, and into a small mirror that ornamented Master Eastman's bedroom. Harry dislodged it, held it aloft in triumph, and executed a war-dance of glee and delight. Tom performed another, holding up his ball of twine, waving his trusty bow over his head, and conducting himself generally like a successful Feejee at a feast.

Harry then hauled in the line, and this was a delicate operation. To be sure, there were no trees in which it might be entangled, but there were three fences armed with rusty nails, and if the string were held slack it would get caught on these. Then, again, there were clothes-lines below, and posts, and all presented difficulties. But the boys remembered what they had been taught, that there were no gains without pains ; also they called to mind the poem recited last week by Harry at school, " How Cyrus laid the Cable."

They remembered the story of Columbus, and determined to persevere ; and they felt very virtuous and energetic as they skilfully drew the string slowly along, taking care to keep it taut, yet not enough so to snap it. At last, it suddenly occurred to them that a double line

could not be established, as Harry had no bow nor arrows, and therefore could not send the other end of the line back to Tom. This idea seemed to dawn upon them simultaneously, and there was a moment's despair; but it was only for a moment. The plan was not perfect, but still it was good. A note could be sent on a single wire or string, and the ball was large enough to admit of this, provided but one message was sent at a time. So Tom wrote, "What's the row?" on a slip of paper, tied it to the string, and Harry hauled it in with great difficulty. He had nothing with which to write except the stump of a little old lead-pencil, and no knife with which to sharpen it—facts which he communicated to Tom, and begged for supplies, holding up the stump at the conclusion of his note to show that the point was broken, and motioning for Tom to send his knife. Tom pulled his communication to his window; but prudence was a virtue learned by experience. Tom would not risk his precious knife: suppose it should fall by the way, how could he ever get it back again? He could not explain at a neighbour's front door that he wanted his knife which was in their back yard! And what would Tom be without his knife?—absolutely nothing!

So he would not imperil this possession; but still he must help his friend. He had already written his weekly letter to his mother, and his ink-bottle and pen stood near him on the table.

It never occurred to him to send Harry the pencil, and use his pen himself, but it did occur to him to send Harry his pen and ink-bottle. So he tied the little black bottle, with its bright green label, with infinite pains to the string, and was so long engaged in the operation that Harry became impatient and jerked the string so violently that he was obliged to shake his fist at him three times, to imply wrath and future punishment, before he would stop. At last the bottle was successfully hung to the string, the cork inserted, and the dangerous journey begun. The string dropped fearfully low with this weight, and the bottle tipped perilously now and again ; but the boys held the string firmly, and passed it through their hands very slowly, and it went ducking and curtsying on its way, over the first fence, over the first clothes-posts and lines, over the second fence, over the second post. Ah, how it dipped ! “ Pull up, pull up ! ” shouted Tom, forgetting the command not to call from the window ; and Harry pulled suddenly. Ah, wretched boy that he was ! The jerk broke the string. Down went the bottle, out came the loose cork, and the entire contents were spilled— not on the snow—ah, no, there was no such good luck !—but on one of the sick lady’s beautiful white cambric ruffled morning-gowns, which was bleaching beautifully, this sunny morning, on the freshly fallen snow ! Two windows were suddenly shut ; two boys

suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth ; two pair of boot-heels stuck out from under two beds in adjoining streets, and two hearts thumped loudly under the beds, as they awaited the crack of doom !

Why they should have supposed that their crime would be instantly discovered, I do not know. It was noon, for time had passed swiftly, had "galloped withal," while the telegraph had been in process of construction (in fact, two hours is a short time in which to originate, develop, and carry into effect a plan of this kind ; Morse was much longer over *his* old telegraph) ; so, as I said, it was noon, and the nurse had gone for her walk, exulting over the downfall of her enemy, and sure of not seeing him, feeling that she had won the day and rid herself of her tormentor. The servants were busy, Mrs. Eastman was out, the neighbours were not likely to interfere, even had they seen the catastrophe ; yet the boys expected instant retribution, and waited under their several beds for even-handed justice to be meted out to them.

Their hearts, however, had time to grow calm, and nothing transpired ; and Tom was forced to go to luncheon when the bell rang, for Mrs. Philips was very punctual. She noticed his rough hair, and observed a feather sticking to his jacket, also much fluff and dust, and she wondered greatly where he had been, but she

said nothing, If she had known, I am inclined to think Miss Biddy O'Nale would have received instructions to sweep Master Tom's room more carefully. But then, again, what could a housemaid leave undone better than the sweeping of a boy's room—especially under the bed? And who could suppose that her sins of omission would be brought to light in such an unexpected way? Mrs. Philips never knew that Tom had retired thither for safety, and Miss O'Nale went unwhipt of justice.

"What's the name of the sick lady who lives opposite?" asked Tom.

"Mrs. Robbins," answered Mrs. Philips.

"Is she very sick?"

"Yes, she is a great sufferer."

"Is she very cross?"

"Oh, no; she is lovely, and kind, and gentle. Her illness seems to have had the effect of perfecting her character; she is perfectly lovely."

"Does she see anybody?"

"Yes; she sees her friends when she is not too ill."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes; very well."

"Will you give me a note to her, and ask her to see me?"

"Why, Tom!" cried Mrs. Philips, in surprise, "why do *you* want to see her?"

"I've something to say to her," answered Tom.

"Won't you tell me what it is?"

"I'd rather not," said Tom.

"But unless I know, I don't like to send you; you might agitate her."

"Guess I should; I didn't think of that," said Tom, and went on quietly with his luncheon. Mrs. Philips asked no more questions; she was beginning to understand her friend's boy.

"Would it agitate you to have your clothes spoiled?" at last asked Tom.

"It might," admitted Mrs. Philips. "I would not like to have my cashmere shawl moth-eaten, nor my last silk dress stained."

"How about your night-gown?"

"Oh, I have a good many night-gowns; I do not think I should care very much about one being spoiled."

"Well, I've ruined one of Mrs. Robbins's night-gowns, and I'd like to tell her I'm sorry," said Tom.

Mrs. Philips laid down her knife and fork.

"How did you do it?" she asked.

"Upset ink on it."

Mrs. Philips was more and more surprised.

"I don't want to tell you; I only want to tell her," said Tom.

For many reasons he saw it to be for Harry's advantage not to let Mrs. Philips know about his share of the business.

"Well," said that good lady, repressing her natural curiosity, and beginning to understand

what her friend Mrs. Bradley had said about children's peculiarities, "I will give you a note to Mrs. Robbins, but you must ask at the door if she is well enough to see you before you deliver it."

Tom promised he would, and immediately after luncheon started on his errand. "I won't be a coward, whatever else I am," he said to himself.

It took some courage, however, for this poor Tom from the country to face a strange lady, and criminate himself. He almost wished she would feel too ill to see him ; but no ! he was admitted almost immediately, and found Mrs. Robbins sitting in an easy-chair by a wood fire. That reminded Tom of home, and he thought of his mother when she put out her hand and smiled, and spoke kindly.

"I'm glad to see you," she said, and her voice was very sweet and pleasant. "I know your mamma, and Mrs. Philips tells me you want to see me."

"Yes, I do ; but not because you know mamma," blurted out Tom.

"Never mind why, then," said Mrs. Robbins. "I am glad to know you for any reason. I've seen you sometimes from my window, when you were writing or studying in your room."

"Did you see me to-day ?" asked Tom, hoping he would not have to confess. But Mrs. Robbins had not seen him, and he was obliged to tell all about the telegraph, and why Harry was shut

up, and how he had spilled the ink; and although he did so in a very few words, it seemed to him to take a very long time to get all through. "I am real sorry," he said, at the conclusion of his story. Mrs. Robbins laughed, and said, good-humouredly, that, after all, she was at the bottom of the mischief for sending word to Harry not to shout from his window. "Mrs. Wilson is very fond of me, and takes good care of me, but she is a little bit cross sometimes to the boys in the neighbourhood."

Then she explained to Tom how much she had to suffer, and how sometimes the pain in her head seemed too great to bear. Then, when a door slammed, or a window, or there was any sudden noise, it would bring on the pain just when she had begun to hope for a little relief. "But I do not expect the boys to remember all this," she said, "and Mrs. Wilson ought not to." She spoke so gently, and looked so sweet, that Tom could have promised then and there to wear carpet slippers for ever, and never to speak above a whisper again; and as she talked to him about many things in which he took delight, it never occurred to him to wonder how she knew he liked them; but he chatted with her unreservedly, and felt almost as though he were at home again. When, at last, she wrote a line to Mrs. Eastman, begging for Harry's release, and asked Tom to deliver it, he suddenly remembered that she was sick.

"I hope I haven't hurt your head," he said.

"Oh, no, not at all; I have enjoyed your visit," she answered, adding, "Come again and see me, and bring Harry and your sister."

Tom left her, and went at once to Mrs. Eastman, who was glad to set Harry free. Mrs. Robbins had not mentioned the fact of her morning-gown being spoiled; she had merely said she heard that Harry was in trouble on her account, and begged as a favour to her that he might be forgiven.

"I call Mrs. Robbins a lady," said Harry, when he and Tom went out together for a walk. "She's a real right-down lady; and I'll never be saucy to her nurse again; and I'll be quiet too, and remember about the doors; and we won't shout across any more."

"It's very queer," said Tom, "that people that *are* real ladies and gentlemen always seem to be gentle and kind. That makes it worth while to try. Sometimes I hate it, and don't see the use of being fussy about gloves and grammar; but, somehow or other, people that are brought up to be ladies and gentlemen are pleasant to be with."

And Tom brought out his gloves, and began to put them on; having accomplished which feat, he spread all his ten fingers out wide, like fans. "Yaaaah! how I do hate them!" he cried.

"So do I," said Harry; "and I don't see the use."

"Well, they say you catch small-pox and scarlet fever, and all sorts of things, by touching them," said Tom. "And maybe we'll catch being gentlemen in the same way. Mrs. Philips says gloves are the thing. I don't know," he concluded doubtfully; "but, any way, I'll wear them half an hour."

CHAPTER XIII.

INTIMATE FRIENDS.

WHILE the fact was slowly dawning on Tom's mind that it was worth while to cultivate good manners, Bessie was arriving at the same conclusion; and both children began to feel the force of their mother's saying, that gentleness came with culture and refinement.

Bessie resisted for a long time. She came to the city determined to be independent, and resolved secretly to hold herself above the demands of fashion.

She despised fashion, which was represented to her mind by the plates she had seen in magazines of ladies with pursed-up mouths, pointing at poodle-dogs with parasols.

This seemed a frivolous pursuit to Bessie, and indeed it could scarcely be deemed the end and object of life to any girl born in the nineteenth century. On her arrival in the city, however, she had been impressed by the quiet self-possession of her cousin Grace, who seemed always to

do the right thing and say the kind word at the right time, and in whose presence everyone seemed to feel easy and at home.

Grace was Bessie's age, only a little girl, and perfectly child-like and natural in all her ways and thoughts. Bessie did not want to be uncharitable, yet unconsciously she strove to see what was undesirable in her cousin, for it was impossible to maintain her theory that all city life was artificial and unnatural in Grace's company. And Bessie was not unlike the rest of the world, in trying to reconcile facts to her theories, instead of theories to facts.

It was established in all story-books that city girls laced tightly, wore thin shoes, spent their nights at balls and their days in bed, went to church only to show their bonnets, and pointed customarily at poodle-dogs with pink parasols.

So when Grace appeared in the morning prettily and neatly dressed, Bessie decided that she was laced so tightly as hardly to be able to breathe, and that she had spent at least two hours before her looking-glass with a maid to braid her hair. But investigation revealed the fact that Grace had no maid, wore no corsets, and dressed in less time than Bessie. It did not take her as long to button her well-fitting dress as it did Bessie to belt in her loose, gown-like clothes. Moreover, no time was lost in finding her little dainty articles of dress, as every glove and ribbon, stud or button, had its appropriate

place in her well-arranged dressing-table. "Old maid!" then said Bessie; but even this withering sarcasm failed to make her cousin less attractive.

Grace never seemed to think about herself at all. In the parlour she was quiet, while Bessie was fidgeting; she would sew or read, or allow her hands to rest in her lap, while Bessie twisted about uneasily, made others nervous by her impulsive movements, or played with the ornaments on the table. Grace was always ready to help others out of difficulties, and covered Bessie's embarrassments in a gentle way that attracted no attention, while it relieved her cousin. If she was asked to play on the piano, she would do so simply, without apology for her want of skill. All she did was done simply, for the reason that she wanted to please others, and was truly unselfish. But Bessie saw affectation in this very simplicity, and scornfully repeated "cityfied," to herself, when she observed it. But even in the pursuits in which a country girl should excel, Bessie saw that her cousin was her superior. In the riding-school, Grace could manage her horse perfectly, while Bessie, who had been known to ride old Dick with no bridle but his mane, found great difficulty in conquering her timidity on these strange horses.

So poor little Bessie, who had not gone very far on her pilgrimage, found envy lying in wait to catch her unawares. It was unbearable that

Grace should excel her in everything ; and she did not at first recognise the fact that the road was open to her, and that, with a very little care, she too could become all that her cousin was in outward grace—possibly more in inward strength, for Bessie had a stronger nature than Grace.

But this was what she did not know. Bessie was magnanimous, and capable of much sacrifice ; but she did not understand as yet the heroism of self-abnegation in trifles. Her foes must be giants, then she would *have at them* with a will ; but she looked over the heads of her dwarf-like enemies—the bosom sins that arose in her own little being and tormented her in pitiful fashion.

“ I don’t want to be a puppet ! ” she had said to her aunt, who urged her to go to dancing-school ; and when there, she sat, with a look of scorn on her face, watching the children dance.

“ Isn’t it ridiculous,” she said to Tom, “ to watch them ? they all hop about like popcorn ! ”

“ I don’t like it for myself,” said honest Tom ; “ my legs weigh a ton when I try to dance, and I’m sure my arms are six feet long. But they don’t all hop like popcorn. Look at Grace ! she is like a field of grain when the wind blows over it. I like to look at her ; she makes me think of mamma and of moonlight, and everything quiet.”

“ Humph ! ” said Bessie, but suppressed her desire to ridicule Tom’s poetical allusions with

a strong effort. A sharp pang of jealousy shot through her heart, however. Was *Tom* going to like Grace best?

It was very hard for her to stand up with a class of beginners, and chassée "to de rank, to de left, to de rrrrank, to de left!" as told to by the French dancing-master. She felt that she was not like waving grain, and she would willingly have acted like a balky horse, but for her innate sense of propriety.

The great tears of mortification stood in her eyes, and she tossed back her head with its short black curly crop, and looked like a rebellious pony first put in harness.

"You do it beautifully, Bessie," said Grace, who stood by. "You will know how to dance very soon, you hold yourself so well."

"I wish you wouldn't watch me," cried Bessie, who felt a lump in her throat. "It's unkind of you, Grace, to stand there watching me."

"I won't, then," said Grace. "I'm sorry I did; I only stood here thinking you would feel less lonely if I did."

"Patronizing thing!" said Bessie to herself, muttering between her teeth, and glowering darkly at her cousin's retreating figure. Then, when left to herself, she felt that all eyes were directed towards her, and would have longed for that little cousin's protecting shelter, but for the fierce jealousy that had blazed up in her heart after smouldering for a week.

For Bessie had been placed in a class below Grace at school, although they were of the same age. She felt this to be unjust, for she knew as much, she thought, and had been as well taught. But Grace had had the advantage of steady application; whereas Bessie's education had been subject to frequent breaks and interruptions, caused by severe weather in winter, which had kept her at home weeks at a time. It was not her fault in any way, but the result was that she could not keep up with a class more advanced in many studies than she was. Grace had tried to comfort her, but Bessie resented all her efforts as those of patronizing pity, and determined to dislike her cousin.

Grace was very unhappy about this; but her mother told her to wait with patience, and she would have a dear friend in Bessie. She had longed so for a friend! For Grace was an only child, and consequently a lonely child, and her dream of bliss for years had been to have Bessie live with her and be a sister to her. It seemed strange and hard to be so disappointed, and Grace could not understand why Bessie should dislike her. She admired Bessie greatly, and longed for companionship. It was a very great trial to her to see that Bessie was forming an intimacy with another little girl. This was Clara Thompson, a good-natured, showy, loud girl, several years older than Bessie, who had originally been in the class with Grace, but, on

account of never knowing her lessons, had been sent to a lower one. Clara was wholly without ambition ; she did not intend to study, and felt no degradation in being called a dunce. She had been the intimate friend of every girl in her class in turn, and was at present embroiled with all. “ ‘A warm friend, and a bitter enemy,’ is my motto,” she declared to Bessie, when she proposed friendship to her.

Bessie thought this was a very fine motto and, without reflecting on the fact that the warmth of Clara’s friendship cooled quickly to the bitterness of enmity, she expressed her approbation.

“Then you’re not a bit like your cousin,” said Clara, in loud tones. “For when I told her my motto, and asked for hers, she said, with her cold smile, ‘Friendship with all, entangling alliances with none.’ I suppose she thinks herself very clever to have made up that sentence.”

“She was quoting, you goose!” cried one of the older girls, who overheard the conversation. “And let me tell you, Miss Clara, that it is a better motto than your own.”

“I don’t think so,” cried Clara ; “I hate your lukewarm dishes. I like people to be hearty !”

“I like heart too, but I’m not fond of your ‘*reel hearty*’ kind,” replied the girl ; and a laugh was raised at Clara’s expense, for that expression exactly described Miss Thompson.

"Grace's motto is a good one," said another girl. "It's a first-rate motto."

"It's a first-rate granny! It's a first-rate fiddlestick!" replied Clara; and this witty retort closed the conversation, as the school-bell rang at that moment.

Aunt Lucy looked upon Bessie's friendship with Clara with annoyance, and she tried to explain to the little girl why it was undesirable; but Bessie could not understand.

"I thought it was foolish for Americans to be aristocratic," she said in reply to her aunt on one occasion; "and I thought you told me to love everybody. Why shouldn't Clara be my friend, just because her father is a tailor? Isn't she as good in the sight of God as I am?"

"Undoubtedly," said Aunt Lucy. "And it is not because her father is a tailor that I object to the intimacy. This is a question of convenience, dear Bessie; it is not a great moral problem. Clara's associations have not been refined; you will find many things in her that are not agreeable. It is better never to begin a friendship than to break one off."

"I don't see why I should break it off," said Bessie; and Aunt Lucy concluded that it was best to let the little girl gain her own experience.

It was not long in coming. Bessie had clear perceptions; and before long it became evident to her that friendship with Clara meant enmity

with the rest of the world, and open war with Grace in particular. It is impossible to fight without an opponent, and Grace was happily unconscious of Clara's dislike. But Bessie, although envious of her cousin, was not capable of meanness, and became very uneasy under Clara's abuse of her relations.

Still she tried to believe that Clara was kind at heart, and her flattery was very sweet to poor Bessie, who was smarting under mortification. Clara declared that Bessie was the brightest, smartest, cleverest girl in the whole world; that Grace couldn't hold a candle to her; that she was worth ten thousand ordinary girls, and so forth. Bessie did not believe Clara; still it was a great salve to her spirit to be flattered in this way, and unconsciously she became very dependent upon it. Little by little she noticed flaws in her new friend's behaviour; and after a while she began to reflect that it was not pleasant to live with your hand against every man, and every man's hand against you. Clara instituted a system of correspondence by which mysterious communications were to be made to each other. All notes were to be written in cipher, and only she and Bessie could understand these dark sayings.

These notes were continually pushed beneath Aunt Lucy's front door, although there was no reason why they should not be properly delivered.

At first, Bessie's love of excitement was gratified at all this mystery ; but gradually she be-thought her that, after all, no very definite end was accomplished, that it was merely playing at mystery ; for the notes were abusive of her school-fellows, and of her aunt and cousin. They were all condemned in the somewhat general term *real mean*, which, after a while, struck Bessie as lacking point.

There was a monotony which savoured of dulness in Clara's communications, and Bessie found it hard to reply. She did not dislike her school-fellows at all, and was dimly conscious that Clara's hatred of Grace was owing to her cousin's superiority.

Clara insisted upon it that she and Bessie were suffering persecution at the hands of aristocratic relations ; but Bessie was obliged to admit that Clara's name was rarely mentioned by her aunt, and never unkindly, and that no interference was offered by any member of her family.

However, Clara conveyed the idea that insuperable objections existed in the mind of Aunt Lucy to Bessie's accepting an invitation to dinner. Bessie assured her such was not the case ; but Clara made it the subject of three notes in cipher, all suggesting different modes of escape for Bessie from her aunt's house.

Bessie, who was growing weary, told her friend very decidedly that she would dine with her any day that she received an invitation to

do so, and that the front door and her aunt's carriage offered abundant means of egress and transportation. After this, Clara invited her without her mother's knowledge. Aunt Lucy told Bessie she should prefer to have her stay at home, but that she might go if she chose. So Bessie went, more for fear of re-awakening the persecution theory than because she wanted to, for Clara's conversation was startling at times to a well-brought-up and refined girl.

Clara received her with great enthusiasm, and introduced her to her mother in her own peculiar way. "Here's Bess Bradley," she said, dragging Bessie by the hand into the room where Mrs. Thompson was. "She's come to dinner. She's awful nice, ma, although she *is* a cousin of that stuck-up Grace Wilberforce."

Mrs. Thompson received Bessie kindly, kissed her, and instantly took a complete and rapid survey of her dress. Her eyes wandered over Bessie's entire figure; and the child, who had never met this particular form of rudeness before, felt very uncomfortable.

"Sit down, and tell me all about yourself; I like to hear about folks," said Mrs. Thompson. "My Clara's real fond of you, and talks so much about you, I'd like to know all about you. What's your father?"

"Papa is a farmer," said Bessie, scarcely knowing how to reply.

"A farmer! Is your father a *farmer*?"

asked Mrs. Thompson, in a tone which clearly indicated that, if such were the case, she should not think much of him.

"Oh," cried Clara, "he is a *gentleman* farmer, mother. He is no end nobby!"

As Bessie had not the least idea of her friend's meaning, she made no reply, but felt more and more uneasy, as Mrs. Thompson evidently intended to find out all about her surroundings, and catechised her closely.

"How large is your place, dear?" she asked.

"I believe there are about a hundred acres in the farm," answered Bessie.

"I suppose your ma keeps a great many servants with such a big place."

"We have two," answered Bessie; "but it is very hard to get good ones, and sometimes we are left alone altogether."

"My senses! I should go mad!" cried Mrs. Thompson. "What does your ma do?—does she cook herself?"

"I think she would find it rather hard to do so," answered Bessie, very stiffly. She was growing indignant, but Mrs. Thompson had no idea the child was ridiculing her mode of expression. That she did so, was a comment on Clara's influence, for, a month before, Bessie could not have been wilfully rude.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Thompson; "no lady could cook herself. I suppose she hires help?"

Bessie made no reply, and Mrs. Thompson continued.

"Does your pa keep many horses?"

"One." Bessie was determined now to give as little information as possible.

"Only one! My senses! How does he get his work done?"

"He has oxen," said Bessie.

"Oxen! good gracious! What does he grow?"

Bessie hesitated for an answer; she really did not understand.

"Do you want to know how tall papa is?" she asked. "I believe about six feet."

"No, no, you little goosey! What kind of stuff does he raise on his farm? What grows in front of your house, for instance?"

"Potatoes," said Bessie, shortly. Mrs. Thompson exchanged a look with her daughter.

"What's your ma like?" she then asked.

"Like a lady, and an angel in heaven," said Bessie, hotly, wishing heartily that she had never come inside Mrs. Thompson's house.

This reply made Mrs. Thompson laugh, and her daughter exclaim, "That's more than I can say for you, ma!"

"Shut up, you saucy thing!" said Mrs. Thompson. "I'm more of a lady than you're ever like to be if you don't get manners somewhere."

"What church do you go to?" she continued

"Episcopal," said Bessie, with brevity.

"Well, *that's* respectable," said Clara's mother, with an emphasis denoting that what had gone before was not. Bessie said nothing.

"How old is your ma?"

"Thirty-seven."

"How old is your pa?"

"Forty."

"Have you any neighbours where you live?"

"Yes, we have."

"Are they all farmers, too?"

"One is a doctor."

"I wonder if he could cure me," said Mrs. Thompson, with singular irrelevancy. "I've been sick now for six years, and no doctor can cure me. I've had seven, all the best in the city, but they can't cure me—mine is such a peculiar case——"

"Oh, goodness gracious! mercies on to me, ma!" cried Clara, with asperity; "if you're going to tell Bess all about your diseases, I'll give up! Come along!—I want to show you my room and my things!" and this dutiful daughter dragged Bessie again by the hand.

"I'd rather stay with your mamma," said Bessie, who began to repent of her own rudeness as soon as she saw how odious it was in Clara.

"Oh, *mammar*—as you call her—don't want you," was the pleasant reply; "she's just as well off without you."

Mrs. Thompson did not appear to think her

daughter's conduct at all strange ; she laughed, and said, " Go along, my dear, and I'll see you some other time. That bad girl of mine has no manners."

Bessie followed Clara to her room, and, when there, was obliged to look at all her " things," as she called her dresses, jewellery, and ornaments. Some were valuable, some were in good taste, but all were pronounced "too sweet for anything" by their owner, who told the price of every article she exhibited, and evidently valued them only for their intrinsic worth.

" I mean to make pa's money fly," said Clara. " I'm his only child, and he's no end rich. I mean to be stunning when I come out ! I'm pretty good at making the rocks fly now."

Then Clara proceeded to show with great mystery all her valentines of the year before, and enlightened Bessie as to the sayings and doings of certain young men of her acquaintance — beaux, she called them — and for a long hour she related anecdotes about these mysterious beings, in which the words *says he* and *says I* were prominent, but which conveyed little or no idea to Bessie's mind. Poor Bessie, she felt completely bewildered ! There was an utter want of childishness in Clara ; she was like a mature person in worldliness, though in attainments the youngest scholar could excel her. After the valentines were locked up away " our

of sight of pa," she proceeded to "do her hair," as she said, in the new style. This operation revealed much, for her drawers and boxes were opened one after another, and such untidiness exhibited as astonished even careless Bessie. At last, after many fruitless attempts to *do* her hair, Clara opened her bedroom-door and loudly called "Slavey!" A quiet little woman obeyed this summons, and was told to dress Miss Clara for dinner. She placed a chair before the mirror, and Clara seated herself. The woman quickly and neatly braided her hair, and dressed her, but not without many imperious commands from her young mistress, and much scolding, interspersed with banter.

"Slavey's going to elope with the hairdresser; that's why she's so pensive."

"Slavey, don't breathe so hard down my neck. The east wind is a fool to you."

"If you don't make me perfectly beautiful, Slavey, I'll dock your wages. Somebody's coming this evening."

These remarks are merely a specimen of Miss Clara's conversation with her maid, who answered not a word, and kept steadily at her work. She had a sad face, and, when she left the room, Bessie asked Clara if she were not well.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Clara; "I hear too much about ma's diseases to trouble myself about Slavey's. I believe her lover died, or something happened to her—I've forgotten what."

"Is she German? she has such a queer name," said Bessie.

"Slavey! Oh, that's not her name! I call her that for short. Her name's Susan. Generally I call her Duck-legs—she's so short; but Slavey comes kind of pat."

Bessie thought that dinner never would end. It was served very handsomely, and with great ostentation. Mr. Thompson told Bessie the price of his wine, as his daughter had of her dresses. Mrs. Thompson related long anecdotes of her various complaints, and Clara interrupted both parents with wild remarks of her own.

After dinner, Mr. Thompson went to sleep, Clara's mother drove away in the carriage to spend the evening with a friend, and the two young girls were left alone together.

Clara improved the time by telling Bessie that *he* would soon be here; and, to Bessie's great annoyance, a ring at the bell sent Clara into a flutter, and announced the arrival of two young men.

What had gone before was nothing to what now went on in the way of folly and vulgarity. Clara bridled and tittered, and blushed and simpered, over the most utter absurdities which these young men gave vent to. Their language was coarse, their manners were familiar; and Bessie, who had never in her life encountered anything of this kind, shrank more and more into herself.

Clara romped like a hoyden, and Bessie almost prayed for the arrival of her carriage. Little or no notice was taken of her, after the first introductions were over, until her pale, set face attracted Clara's attention. She immediately began to ridicule her for the benefit of her friends, called her Queen Bess, and introduced her as one of the royal family of Wilberforce ; and then the three combined to exercise their wit upon the little girl, the young men paying her devoted mock attentions, and Clara declaring she was jealous of the sensation Bessie had created, and should look upon her as a rival hereafter.

This style of banter, begun in fun, was carried very far ; for Bessie, terrified and disgusted at the same time, sat motionless, silently enduring what was actual pain to her sensitive soul, and, as she became more and more chilling in her manner, the others became more and more determined to torment her.

At last one of the young men declared himself to be her devoted lover, and attempted to take her hand, while he poured forth torrents of exaggerated flattery.

"Don't touch me !" cried Bessie, springing from her chair, and looking like a hunted animal. This brought forth peals of laughter from all. "Look at the princess !" they cried ; "look at Queen Bess !"

"Clara !" said Bessie, in a voice which actually trembled, "I did not know, when I came to

your house, that I was to be made ridiculous. I did not know, when I said I would be your friend, what I would have to bear. Now let me go home, and let's part without anger. I am not your friend, and desire nothing more to do with your friends."

Bessie, child as she was, spoke like a woman, and, bowing to the three who had so mercilessly ridiculed her, passed out of the room with a firm step.

She went to Clara's room, and wrapped herself in her shawl, and begged Susan to let her know when the carriage came. Susan seemed to appreciate the case, and offered to walk home with her—an offer which was gratefully accepted.

Clara came running up stairs, begged her not to go, declared it was all "for fun," and that "those men ought to be ashamed." But Bessie quietly persisted; and when she said good-bye at the front door, she added, quietly, "I'm very sorry, Clara, but this *is* good-bye."

"Oh, Aunt Lucy!" she said that night, when she went to bed, after telling her aunt all her troubles,—“oh, aunty! I have been so foolish, so wicked! I have thought all your kind, loving care of me was useless tyranny; I have called you fussy, and thought you were proud and fashionable. I have hated Grace because she was better than I was; and I made a friend of Clara just because I was uncomfortable in feeling that I didn't know how to behave as well as

Grace, and so I wanted to go where I felt I was best. And I thought you were stiff in your notions, and cityfied ; and I didn't want to do as you thought best. Oh, aunty, I see now all you wanted to tell me ! I won't say what is unkind of Clara, but I see what you meant. And I said to myself you are proud, and it was because her father was a tailor ; and I knew all the time it wasn't that, for Carrie's father is not in any better position, and yet you and Grace love her. I have been horrid, aunty ! Do you believe you ever will love me any more ? ”

“ My dear, darling Bessie,” was all Aunt Lucy said, and then listened to the little girl's confession of all the sins of envy that had beset her poor little soul.

And that night, before Bessie slept, she resolved that she would be a lady. She saw, though dimly still, that she could be a lady wherever her lot might be cast,—that to be *lowly* was not to be *low*.

She saw that she *must* be a lady if she would follow Aunt Lucy's maxim, her mother's maxim, Grace's maxim,—“ Love God, and thy neighbour as thyself.” She saw that all means of culture were useful helps, were conveniences, as Aunt Lucy said, but that the deepest depths were hidden in her soul ; that if her inner life were pure, her outward life would be refined ; that if her thoughts were true, her lips would be ; if her judgment was clear, she would be

charitable to all. If she cultivated her mind, she could exert a gentle influence: if she educated herself, she could help others. Shallowness, pretension, folly, vulgarity, would find no place in a well-balanced mind, and the revelation of vulgarity she had seen through Clara made her resolve against it.

"I see the difference now," she said; "it is not the fashionable city life, it is not elegance in dressing or in living, that makes a lady,—but education and refinement of feeling, and——"

Grace's room opened out of Bessie's, and when she went out, Aunt Lucy had left the door open. Through it, Bessie saw her cousin kneeling by the bedside; her pure, sweet face was raised, although her eyes were closed, and her hands clasped. She did not know that Bessie could see her, and with quick instinct Bessie turned away, and did not watch her.

"Yes, *that* makes the difference!" said Bessie to herself, softly, as she laid her hand on her neglected Bible, and thought how many days had passed since she had prayed to be delivered from evil.

CHAPTER XIV.

AUNT LUCY'S SERMON.

SO our little mice gradually learned that there were many traps in their world, with tempting baits, but that it was safest not to run into them. Wilfulness was natural, but led to very

uncomfortable results ; and, as Bessie said to Tom after her experience in choosing her own society, "Maybe older people do know best, after all."

This was quite a step forward, and was the first lesson that Tom and Bessie really learned. The next was, to accept the situation. This they did little by little. After admitting that their friends knew more than they did, it gradually dawned upon their intelligence that, if this was the case, it would be well to follow their guidance.

"But it seems to me we learn more by seeing what is bad than by going with those that are good," said Tom. "You didn't see how pleasant Aunt Lucy was until you found out how disagreeable Mrs. Thompson was ; and I only learn what *not* to do."

"That's so !" said Bessie, thoughtfully. "But, Tom, that's the way the Commandments are written,—Thou shalt *not* do this and that and the other. It would be easier to know what was right if they said, Thou shalt,—wouldn't it?"

"It says, 'Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day,' and 'Honour thy father and thy mother,'" said Tom, slowly, thinking over the Commandments one by one. "There are two *shalts*, Bessie, and not very easy ones, either."

"It's not very easy to keep the Sabbath day holy," answered restless Bessie ; "but it's easy enough to honour mamma and papa."

"I'm not so sure of that, Bess. We don't honour them much when we act so as to make everybody say they don't bring us up well. I don't think we've much to brag of in that line."

Bessie was silent for a few moments.

"Ideas come slowly, Tom. I think we are just beginning to see what is right and wrong. It never seemed to me worth while to try and behave nicely until lately, and yet mamma has always taught us to. When I thought it was only so that we would appear well, it didn't seem worth while to me. I don't care very much what other people think about me; but now it seems to me there's more in it than I used to see. Gracie, why is it *right* to be well-behaved?"

"I don't know, Bessie," answered the little girl; "I've never thought much about it."

"Well, why do you try always to be so nice?" asked Tom.

Grace coloured slightly, as she gave her reason in a very gentle tone.

"I think we ought to be as much like Jesus as we can be," she said.

"Oh, Grace!" cried Bessie. "Of course we ought, but that is being religious, that has nothing to do with good manners. There's nothing about good manners in the Bible from beginning to end."

"No," said Grace, thoughtfully; "but it says we must think of whatsoever things are lovely,

pure, good, and true : and if we do, then we can't think of what is hateful ; and if we are thinking what is pleasant, we will *be* pleasant—won't we ?”

“Maybe,” said Bessie, and added, “It does seem to me, now that I think about it, that the best-behaved people are Christians. Do you suppose trying to be like Christ makes ladies and gentlemen ? How very queer !”

“It makes you gentle,” said bluff Tom ; “and that's what it means, and that makes it worth while to try. Now I begin to see, Bess.”

“But, Tom, Aunt Maria is a Christian, and she is just as cross as two sticks, and not a bit gentle. She scolds mamma, and thinks more about what Mrs. Drew is going to say than about the whole Bible put together.”

Tom shrugged his shoulders. “And yet, Bessie, you see how, in the end, she always has to do mamma's way. And when she is cross, and mamma speaks gently, it always makes her answer more quietly ; and Aunt Maria does lots of good, although she is so cross.”

“I'll tell you what I think,” said Bessie : “there are two kinds of Christians—horse-Christians, and cow-Christians. The horse-Christians do all the hard pulling, and get all the hard work ; and they kick up and rear and pitch people over their heads sometimes, too, but they are useful. Then the cow-Christians just keep quiet, and never do much ; they

think a good deal, and give kind words, just as cows give milk ; and they are always on hand when they're wanted, and are comfortable and nice to have."

Grace and Tom laughed heartily at Bessie's view of life.

"Then Aunt Maria is a horse-Christian," said Tom, "and mamma is a cow-Christian. I like cows best."

"I'm awfully afraid I'm going to be a horse," said Bessie, dolefully.

"Don't !" counselled Tom.

"People plague me so," said Bessie : "they *are* so stupid ! Is there anything in the Bible about stupid people, Grace ?"

"I think we're all stupid," answered Grace. "I think the more we learn, the more we see how stupid everybody always has been. That's why I want to learn as much as I can. Maybe we can be just a little bit wiser, if we try hard. When they burned people to death for being witches, that was stupid ; and when they cut kings' heads off, that was stupid ; and when kings tried to make everybody believe just as they did, *that* was stupid. And most of the mischief that is done in the world comes from stupidity ; it comes because we don't understand ourselves, or each other."

"Then we are all stupid in a lump," said Bessie.

"What are you going to do about it ?" asked Tom.

"I don't believe I ever shall do much," sighed Grace. "I know, if I'm anything, I shall be a cow-Christian ; but I'll try to give kind words, as Bessie says."

"And I shan't do much," cried Bessie. "If I kick and rear, still I'll try to do my share of the pulling, and keep on a steady trot till I drop."

"And I shan't do much if I've got to study," groaned Tom. "Confound the Latin grammar! I say, Bess, do you suppose there are any donkey-Christians?"

The three children laughed together as Tom put this question with a very whimsical face, and Aunt Lucy, who had entered the room unnoticed, joined in their mirth.

"No, Tom," she answered, when they were all quiet again. "No one that has learned the law of Christ can ever be brutally stupid. This is the law, 'That ye love one another.' Love teaches more than the Latin grammar. You'll conquer Latin in time, never fear ; but it's the study of a lifetime to learn to love others as ourselves. There's this comfort, however, that, although the lesson is hard, the Master is divine, and though our intelligence is limited, his is omniscient. So we will all take courage, and do our best, and hope to hear it said in another life, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

Aunt Lucy seldom preached, and when she did, her sermons were short. This one came in just the right time, for it made the little mice

think, and prepared them for what was to come. This was—

CHAPTER XV

A VISIT FROM AUNT MARIA.

YES! Aunt Maria followed the illustrious example of America's patron saint, Y. Doodle, Esq., and came to town.

Like him, she "could not find the tailor's shop, there were so many houses," and arrived at Aunt Lucy's late at night, breathless and exhausted, after a prolonged hunt for her boarding-house. Mrs. Wilberforce tried to induce her to stay with her, and urged it very kindly.

"No," she said, "I never again will stay with any relation, uninvited. And I have had quite enough of staying with those of my relations who have *children*."

Bessie moved uneasily. She did not like to be reminded of former delinquencies. Aunt Maria could not be persuaded to remain a night. "No," she said; "I have heard city people talk! They all say their houses are used like hotels by their country cousins. It shall never be said of me that I made use of anyone! I prefer to be independent."

So she called upon Mrs. Wilberforce to order her carriage, and find Mrs. Duncan's boarding-house. As Mrs. Duncan had died at least five years before, and her establishment had been broken up at that time, Aunt Lucy begged to

recommend another in the immediate neighbourhood. She had much difficulty in persuading the old lady of the truth of her statements. She had "never heard of Mrs. Duncan's death," she said, in tones which implied entire disbelief in the fact. Aunt Lucy would willingly have obliged her, but it was a manifest impossibility for her to "drive to Mrs. Duncan's," so she drove to Mrs. Tanner's.

Mrs. Hampton resisted this as a high-handed measure, and held Aunt Lucy personally responsible for the dark entry, high stairs, and back second-story bedroom which was her fate at Mrs. Tanner's well-known boarding-house.

"I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Wilberforce. "I wish you would stay with me, but if you will not, this is really the best I can do for you, at such short notice."

"Bad's the best," said Aunt Maria, grimly. "I have not been to this city for five years. It has not improved in my absence."

Aunt Lucy made every arrangement she could for the old lady's comfort, and promised to come in the morning to see her. But when morning came, she was unable to leave her bed, having taken a severe cold the night before, while driving with Aunt Maria.

"Bessie, dear, will you go and look after Aunt Maria," she said to the little girl, who stood by her bedside, ruefully listening to this wish expressed in husky tones.

She would have preferred infinitely to have remained at home and nursed her dear Aunt Lucy, but Grace was at her mother's side, and, of course, hers was the first right.

"Oh, aunty!" she began, but stopped quickly in the beginning of her remonstrance, remembering her resolution to do her best, and her aunt's little sermon.

"Yes, I'll go," she said, hastily, and was repaid by Aunt Lucy's, "Thank you, darling."

So Bessie wrapped herself warmly, and went to Aunt Maria. She found that lady in her bedroom, in a state of burning indignation.

"If it were not that I am obliged to see my lawyer, I should go home at once!" she said. "I have been grossly insulted. The people in this house are barbarians! What do you think, Elizabeth? I went down to the breakfast-table this morning in my best morning-gown—this, that I have on—and in this cap, which Miss Chapman made for me only two years ago; and, do you believe me?—as I entered the room, there was a titter all around the table. No one arose, no one asked me to sit down, except Mrs. Tanner, who told the waiter to show me to my seat. And as he did so, he laughed, and in the mirror opposite I saw him wink at the maid in waiting, who burst out laughing, and spilt a cup of coffee on me. And as I left the room, I heard a young man, who sat at the further end of the table, say to his neighbour, 'Mrs. Noah,

as she appeared on leaving the ark.' He meant *me*, Elizabeth—*Me!*"

"It was very rude," said Bessie, trying very hard not to laugh; "but I wouldn't care, aunty; you do not mind what a stranger says of you—do you?"

"Yes, I do!" answered Mrs. Hampton. "Why should *I* be called Mrs. Noah? is there anything antiquated or odd in my appearance?"

"Well, you see, Aunt Maria," began Bessie, and then stopped, much perplexed to know how to go on.

"*What* do I see?" asked the old lady, severely.

"Why, I hate to say it," faltered Bessie, wishing with all her heart that Grace were by to help with her delicate tact. "But your dress and cap are a little old-fashioned."

"And do you suppose *I* care for the fashion? Do you suppose I do not know more what is suitable than that little whipper-snapper downstairs?"

"I wouldn't care," said Bessie, soothingly; "he is a rude young man."

"It's easy to say you wouldn't care!" replied Aunt Maria; "but I have always been treated with respect, and now to be called Mrs. Noah, and ridiculed in a boarding-house! This never would have happened, if I had been allowed to have my own way, and go to Mrs. Duncan's!"

"But how *could* you go to Mrs. Duncan, if she is dead?" asked Bessie.

"I don't believe she is dead," was the reply.

Bessie kept silence, although sorely tempted to say what she thought. But there was something about Mrs. Hampton that moved her to pity. There was all the old obstinacy, to be sure, but with it was mingled a little shade of self-distrust that Bessie had never seen before in her aunt. She seemed to make a confidante of the little girl, and to appeal for help and sympathy.

Bessie contrasted her present manner with her usually imperious one, and remembered how many years the old lady had lived like a despotic queen on her own solitary domain, till she had acquired the habit of thinking herself perfect in everything. She was, in fact, the leading character in her own vicinity. Her will was law, and she was looked up to by all the simple villagers as a goddess of wisdom. Minerva herself might quail before ridicule if her draperies were not classically correct; and Bessie saw that her aunt evidently doubted the correctness of her costume, although she did not admit it.

The little girl remembered how often she had winced under her aunt's ungentle criticism, and she also remembered with what gentleness and dignity her mother had received all the dictatorial and critical remarks of Mrs. Hampton, who invariably found fault with everything. This was a good opportunity to revenge herself. Bessie saw that she had but to say a few stinging things about the old lady's appearance to

drive her almost frantic ; she saw that her self-love was wounded, and that a very little more would make her positively unhappy.

"And she deserves to be," thought Bessie. "I'll just let her see *now* how mamma feels when she comes around plaguing her ; it's time she found out how she makes others feel."

She glanced furtively at her aunt, who was standing before the long mirror, surveying herself with evident dissatisfaction ; her face was at variance with her words.

"I'm dressed in excellent taste, I am sure ! Mrs. Noah, indeed !"

And yet it flashed across the old lady's mind, even as she spoke, that her stiff, narrow skirts, flat cap, and tight sleeves, *did* look a little like the conventional figure of Mrs. Noah as seen in the toy arks. She faced Bessie suddenly, and saw that the child noticed the resemblance too ; but in that glance Bessie saw something in her face which touched her. It was so unusual for Mrs. Hampton to appeal to anyone, and Bessie felt that she was the only one who could help her in this absurd extremity.

"That ye love one another." That was Aunt Lucy's text, that was mamma's life. "Oh, but I *don't* love her, she is so disagreeable," thought Bessie. "That ye love one another !" Bessie fidgeted uneasily.

"What kind of caps does your Aunt Lucy's mother wear ?" asked Aunt Maria.

Bessie described them, and, as she did so, became interested in her subject as she observed the close attention with which Mrs. Hampton followed her remarks. It was so wonderful for Aunt Maria even to listen to her, and here she was almost asking advice from her. It was a touch of humanity that went to Bessie's heart. Aunt Maria, then, dreaded ridicule as much as anyone; this seemed to bring her more on a level with ordinary beings, and the wickedness melted gradually out of Bessie's heart.

"I'll tell you what to do, aunty!" she cried, with genuine enthusiasm, warming to her theme. "Let me go and buy you a cap and a ruffle, just such as old Mrs. Wilberforce wears. I know where to go; I've often been to the place with Aunt Lucy. It's not like a store, it's like a private house; and Madame Duvant keeps everything put away nicely in boxes and wardrobes. All her customers dress beautifully; they buy everything from her, and she imports everything from Paris for them. I can't make a mistake, you see, for she is sure to have the right thing. Do let me, Aunt Maria! Then I'll dress you myself, and when you go down to luncheon I'll go with you; and that rude young man will see how splendid you are, and he will wish he had never been born when he remembers that he called you Mrs. Noah!"

Mrs. Hampton sat down and listened to the voice of the charmer. Then she shook her head.

"Absurd!—At my age!" she said, indignantly; then took another look in the mirror.

"No, no, it's not absurd," cried Bessie. "You've got to see your lawyer. You might as well be magnificent; then you can hold up your head high as you do in church, and look splendid."

Bessie did not say this to flatter her aunt. Mrs. Hampton had been a great belle and beauty in her day, and had still a very dignified and elegant appearance when handsomely dressed; and Bessie admired her august aunt, and was quite sincere in calling her "splendid."

"*Do*, Aunt Maria!" she persisted. "Why shouldn't you?—you've heaps of money! *Do*!"

"If you are sure of getting what is suitable, child," said Mrs. Hampton, wavering, as she thought of the impression she would create on the young scoffer downstairs at luncheon time; and she took out her portemonnaie.

"You are very young," she said to Bessie.

"Oh, I'm old enough to buy a cap for you," said Bessie.

"Go, then, and ask your Madame Duvant to send me morning-gowns and caps, and whatever else is necessary," said Aunt Maria, coming to a sudden resolution; and Bessie hurried off well pleased to execute this commission.

In less than an hour Mrs. Hampton's bedroom looked like a milliner's establishment, for Bessie ordered a variety of garments, wishing her aunt to make her own selection; and the

voluble and good-natured Frenchwoman who came with the goods succeeded in persuading Mrs. Hampton to purchase a complete outfit.

When at last she was arrayed in stylish though appropriate garments, and the woman had left them alone together, Bessie and her aunt looked at each other in astonishment, for Bessie had exclaimed with real feeling, "Oh, Aunt Maria, how handsome you are!" and Mrs. Hampton had kissed her and said, "Thanks to you, my child!" And yet, the sky did not fall!

Aunt Maria had never kissed Bessie before!

So they were both astonished. It was not gratified vanity on the old lady's part; it was feeling called forth by the little girl's prompt recognition of her need and enthusiasm in her cause. Very few people cared if Aunt Maria looked like Mrs. Noah or not: it was pleasant to have a little niece who did care. And in her new dress, and with her pretty little niece at her side, Aunt Maria felt that a coalition had been formed before which the young scoffer would quail.

And this was the first fruit of Aunt Lucy's little sermon.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

THERE are some people who are apparently put into the world to chasten the spirits of their friends and neighbours. It is their mission. They are a means of grace to the community.

in which they live. Aunt Maria is one of these. And yet the good old lady had no desire to be disagreeable. It was merely her want of tenderness and consideration. You will observe that I say merely. This story has not had enough moral to it, so now in my concluding chapter I wish to draw one. Aunt Maria *merely* wanted to have her own way always. This was why she met with little love. She had her own way, for most people prefer peace at any price, and it is far easier to give up than to fight. So everyone had given up to her all her life long, and the consequence was that in her old age she found very few to love her; indeed, I am afraid nobody loved her. Mrs. Bradley was very kind to her, and Mrs. Wilberforce very patient; her servants did her work well, and her husband, brother, minister, and doctor respected her.

The villagers looked upon her with awe, as a superior being; but children never smiled in her face when she passed by. Her little nephews and nieces never kissed her, and she never cuddled them. When they were taken to her house, they experienced the sensations of juvenile delinquents entering the well-ordered penal establishment built for their use and behoof, and maintained at public expense. There was nothing homelike about her house.

Can you draw the moral, dear little readers? Selfishness is never lovely nor lovable. Poor

Aunt Maria ! in her old age she found herself very lonely. She never had a child of her own, and it was a difficult matter how she should dispose of her large property after her death.

Uncle Daniel had made his will satisfactorily to himself years ago, but Aunt Maria had not done so. She had come to the city for this purpose. She wished to consult her lawyer, she said ; but consultation with her meant dictation.

Her recent visit to her brother's house (in his wife's absence) had convinced her that money left in his family would be thrown away. Such children as his were not to be trusted with money at any time, and hard work only would ever bring them to a sense of responsibility.

The farm would furnish ample support for them, for they never would require anything more than the necessities of life. Elegance was out of the question altogether.

"If Mary Bradley was contented to sit down quietly and bring up her children like wild-cats, why, let her do so ! It was wonderful ; for, when she was a young girl, she had been used to luxury and elegance and refinement. But some people were born with low instincts ; and it was evident that Mary was, or she never could consent to live on that out-of-the-way farm, and let the children run wild ; if she had been what she should have been, she would have managed better."

So reasoned Aunt Maria. Little did she know

of the daily and hourly struggles of the delicate, gentle little woman, who strove with all her might to do her duty in that station of life into which God had called her. Little did she know of the weariness of body and mind that "Mary" suffered, after a long day spent in trying to make life happier and better for those around her, nor of the anxious thought and fervent prayers that went up from her unselfish heart for the good of her children. And her children had strong virtues, born of her patience and sweetness. Not one of our four naughty little mice would have told a lie; not one would commit a wilful disobedience; not one would be knowingly unkind. There was a sturdiness of principle and rectitude of purpose in them; but, oh, they were certainly very trying at times!—very careless, very thoughtless, very wild! If Aunt Maria had brought them up, she would have treated them morally as some Chinese mothers treat their children physically. She would have swathed and bandaged them, and confined the freedom of their dispositions, till they grew in the shape and pattern she designed for them. But Mrs. Bradley did not do this, and consequently Aunt Maria thought she had no "faculty;" thought she was indifferent to their future, and contented with obscurity; and so she determined to leave her money to a college in the West.

So that is what the little mice accomplished!

They nibbled away the purse-strings, and let the gold roll out. They *merely* took their own way when mamma was gone.

And Aunt Maria came to town, and sent for her lawyer, and was laughed at by a stranger ; and Bessie rescued her.

The lawyer was a busy man, and did not answer Mrs. Hampton's summons as quickly as she thought he ought to. In fact, he had not the least intention of calling upon her, and directed one of his clerks to invite the old lady to his office at a certain hour, when he would see her. This the clerk fully intended to do, but forgot it for twenty-four hours. Meanwhile Mrs. Hampton became impatient. She wanted to go home. Uncle Daniel was laid up with rheumatism, and Kitty never would remember to sweep the best bedroom. She *must* get home at once. She had no idea of allowing things to go to wreck and ruin without her, as Mary Bradley had done. But the second day passed, and no lawyer appeared.

Meanwhile Tom had been earnestly besought by his sister to pay a visit to his aunt, and, moreover, Mrs. Philips had insisted upon it that he should do so. Very unwillingly he dressed himself and took his way to Mrs. Tanner's, hoping that Aunt Maria had gone home.

But, to his great sorrow, the waiter told him Mrs. Hampton was at home ; and Tom went up stairs, and knocked at his aunt's door.

"Come in," said her voice, but it sounded very unlike Aunt Maria's usually strong tones, and Tom walked in to find his aunt writhing in pain. She had twisted her ankle early in the morning, she said, coming up those abominable dark stairs, and not a living being had been near her since—"not a living being," she repeated, indignantly, as though ghosts had been there in plenty, but the human element necessary to her comfort was wanting.

"It's too bad!" cried Tom. "Have you been in pain all that time, and alone? Let me help you on to the bed, and I'll go for a doctor."

"No, no! I won't have any doctor!" cried Aunt Maria. "They're a set of butchers—they'll cut my leg off! Oh, dear!" and she groaned and turned white, as she tried to stand.

"Indeed they won't!" cried Tom. "I'll go for a first-rate one; he won't cut your leg off. Why, Aunt Maria, my hens twist their toes, and Ponto hurts his leg lots of times, and I never *think* of cutting them!"

This was conclusive to Tom's mind, but not to his aunt's. "No," she repeated, "I won't have a doctor. Get me my bottle of Pond's Extract, and rub my ankle gently for me. Oh dear! I wish I had *some* one to take care of me except a great boy!"

This was scarcely complimentary, but Tom felt a real sympathy for pain, and did not mind a little abuse. He hastened to his aunt's trunk

and stirred up its contents freely till he found the bottle she referred to. "Here it *is*!" he cried. "Now, Aunt Maria, get on the bed ; you ought to have your leg up, not hanging down."

"I know that," said Aunt Maria ; "but I can't get it up. How can I get on to the bed, I'd like to know?"

"Is it as bad as all that?" asked Tom.

"Yes, it *is* as bad as all that," said Aunt Maria, testily.

"Then you must have a doctor," said Tom, decidedly.

"I *won't* have a doctor," said Aunt Maria, with equal decision.

"Then you must get to bed," persisted Tom. "It's always bad to let your leg hang down. I always make Ponto lie down."

"I'm not Ponto, and I *can't* lie down," groaned poor Mrs. Hampton, fierce even in her pain.

Tom looked at the bed ; it was at the further end of the room, but it was on castors, and could be moved easily. Tom remembered a saying of his father's, "If the mountain can't come to Mahomet, Mahomet must come to the mountain." He reversed the order of things. "If Aunt Maria can't get to her bed, the bed must get to Aunt Maria ;" and, without further parley, he began to push the bed up towards her chair. It was a troublesome job, as it seemed inclined to go every way but the right one, and Aunt Maria protested loudly all the

time. But, after much pushing and pulling, and rumbling and creaking, the bed at last stood by the old lady's chair.

"If I had been strong enough, I'd have lifted you up and carried you," said Tom; and Aunt Maria felt as if she were in the hands of a determined young Yahoo.

She was trembling all over with the pain she had borne for so many hours alone, and had that feeling of helplessness that comes from physical exhaustion, yet she would not give in and allow Tom to go for a doctor. So the boy took the case in his own hands.

"You must lean on my shoulder," he said. "I'll hold your leg up, you can rest on the other one, and then you must hoist on to the bed."

After some resistance, this programme was carried out, and Tom had the satisfaction of knowing that his aunt's leg was *up*, but also of fearing that it was all up with his aunt, for she turned very white, groaned, and seemed about to faint. Poor Tom! it was hard to be called upon to act as nurse and doctor at the same time. He ran to the hall and called for help; but, as Aunt Maria had expressed it, not a living being came to his assistance. He rang the bell furiously; but in Mrs. Tanner's boarding-house no servant ever thought of answering a bell. They would be running from morning till night if they did, they said.

Tom remembered to have seen several bottles in the trunk ; he ran for them, and applied them to his aunt's nose. First a whiff of benzine, then one of paregoric, then one of castor-oil. The benzine was most efficacious, so he tried that again ; and presently Mrs. Hampton revived with a shudder, and motioned it away. It had done all that its label claimed for it,—it restored her colour.

Then he had recourse to Pond's Extract, and bathed Aunt Maria's ankle with it. This he did very gently, first covering her with a blanket, for she was shivering.

Then he administered a glass of brandy, which dose he also found among the bottles, for Aunt Maria never travelled without her medicine-chest. This varied treatment seemed really to benefit the sufferer, and she declared she was much better.

"But you must be bandaged," declared Tom. And Aunt Maria agreed that it would be a relief ; but declared she would do it herself, that no doctor should come inside that room.

So Tom went to the druggist's at the corner for a bandage, and came back with a neat little roll of cotton ; but Aunt Maria found that she could not manage it at all.

"Let me try," said Tom ; "I guess I can do it. I used to bandage Archie's arm—Dr. Jarvis showed me how when mamma was away."

And, much to the old lady's surprise, Tom

bandaged her poor ankle beautifully. The boy had a natural taste for surgery, although hitherto he had practised only on animals, his little brother, and Kate the cook. His treatment of the ear had not been peculiarly successful, although to his dying day he insisted upon it that he restored Kate's hearing.

Luckily, Mrs. Hampton did not remember that occurrence, which was fortunate for her peace of mind. Submission was forced upon the poor lady; she was like a horse in the hands of Rarey. Having been thrown, she was powerless and without the use of her right leg—what could she do but submit?

Tom had a delicate touch which was remarkable in a boy, and in all the bathing and rubbing and bandaging, he really did contrive not to hurt his aunt. But what was he to do with her? He could not leave her all alone in that boarding-house. Who would wait on her? How could she get her dinner? "I'll go for Aunt Lucy," he said, and accordingly did so. But Aunt Lucy was unable to leave the house; her cold was too severe. She offered to send her maid, and Bessie and Tom escorted the woman to their aunt's room.

Mrs. Hampton instantly dismissed her, and the children looked at each other in dismay.

"I won't have any strangers bothering around me," said Aunt Maria. "I'll be up and about by evening."

But evening came, and found her groaning and suffering. Tom and Bessie obeyed all her directions, but she could not get any relief from pain. At last, greatly to the comfort of the children, Mrs. Wilberforce sent her own physician to the poor old lady's relief without consultation; and once there, the doctor was master of the situation. Mrs. Hampton could not turn him out of the room.

He pronounced it a very bad sprain, and said it would be necessary for Mrs. Hampton to keep very quiet for many days to come.

This was sorrowful news, but true. The doctor said *days*; but it was weeks before Aunt Maria left the bed into which Tom had hoisted her so unceremoniously. They were weeks of great suffering and weariness.

Aunt Maria had never been ill in her life, that she could remember, and this was quite a new discipline to her. They were weeks in which she learned more than years had taught her—weeks in which she learned her dependence on the loving care of others. Hired nurses she could have, and did have, although it was a sore trial to her spirit. All that money could procure was hers, but pain taught her the value of human sympathy and love.

This she had—but not from hirelings. Tom and Bessie, children as they were, had made up their minds to keep that law of Christ which their mother had taught them and Aunt Lucy

had preached about ; and during the long, tedious illness, which was such a trial to their aunt, they devoted themselves to her comfort.

It was hard work to leave school, after hours of confinement there, and sit in a hot room by his aunt's side, reading to her ; but Tom came to his work manfully, and went through the newspaper every day religiously.

It was a little effort to save ten cents for a rosebud, when cocoa-nut candy was so good ; but Tom clutched his money tightly, and marched past the candy-store bravely, and into the florist's.

It was equally hard for Bessie to bear the long hours of weariness she spent at her aunt's side, writing innumerable directions to Kitty from Mrs. Hampton's dictation, or attending to the old lady's numberless wants ; but she never flinched. Thankless as it seemed, the children were at their self-imposed task every day as soon as their studies were over ; and although their aunt never gave any sign of pleasure, she listened with straining ears for the door-bell, and the little feet that came pattering up to her desolate room, made more home-like by their thoughtful care.

"She suffers so much," they said to each other.

"It's what mamma and papa would do," said Bessie.

"It would be too mean, too confoundedly selfish, to leave her all alone," added Tom.

"But, oh, I do hope she will soon get well!" they said in chorus.

At last she was well enough to be moved, and Mrs. Bradley was sent for to act as escort home. Oh, what a joyful day it was, when the children met their parents again! Mrs. Tanner's house never heard such rejoicing before, for the meeting took place there, and the dark staircase was actually illuminated by the brightness of Bessie's eyes, as she nearly strangled her father in the warmth of her embrace, while Tom almost succeeded in smothering his mother.

Not very good manners, you see! Oh, Tom! and, oh, Bessie! must I close this book, and leave you still unregenerate in the ways of politeness?

Hear what Aunt Maria said. It was late in the evening, and the children had gone home for the night. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley sat in Mrs. Hampton's room.

"I've made a great many mistakes in my life," she said, and her voice trembled; "I've been harsh where I should have been gentle, stern where I should have been kind. This sickness has shown me a great deal, and I'm glad it was sent to me. It prevented me from making another great mistake. Never mind what it was; but I know better now. Tom has been telling me of his ambition to be a surgeon; he thinks, however, that you won't be able to afford his education, and expects to work on the

farm. I shall see to that, Thomas. Hire all the help you like, and let Tom study ; it will be my affair.

“ And Bessie ! A woman ought to have means of her own,—it makes her more independent. I’ll see to that also.

“ Don’t let the children know I mean to leave them money ; it would spoil everything. They love me now,—at least, I hope they do,—and they don’t think about money ;—don’t let them know they have anything to expect from me. I owe them more than I ever shall pay ; for they have taught me a great deal, and I am not ashamed to own this, when I remember that the Saviour tried to teach his disciples by means of a little child. I have been hard on you, Mary, and I thought you did not bring up your children to be ladies and gentlemen. Well, their manners are rough yet, and I’m glad you’ve put them in a way to improve ; but they have the three requisites of the gentleman and gentlewoman,—Truth, Love, and Honour.”

If Aunt Maria can say this, as she does, in all sincerity, after knowing them intimately only for a few weeks, I hope those of their acquaintance who have followed their career in the foregoing pages will not say less, but glance with a forgiving eye at their foibles, and join with me in loving some other Babies.

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